

PUBLIC DOMAIN SHORT WORKS - NOVEMBER 2015

EDITED BY MATT PIERARD

*In this issue: tales from the deep South, from the urban North, and from Hindu and Gaelic legends.
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MAGPIE OVER THE HILL

by John Galsworthy

from *Inn of Tranquility and Other Essays*

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I lay often that summer on a slope of sand and coarse grass, close to the Cornish sea, trying to catch thoughts; and I was trying very hard when I saw them coming hand in hand.

She was dressed in blue linen, and a little cloud of honey-coloured hair; her small face had serious eyes the colour of the chicory flowers she was holding up to sniff at--a clean sober little maid, with a very touching upward look of trust. Her companion was a strong, active boy of perhaps fourteen, and he, too, was serious--his deep-set, blacklashed eyes looked down at her with a queer protective wonder; the while he explained in a soft voice broken up between two ages, that exact process which bees adopt to draw honey out of flowers. Once or twice this hoarse but charming voice became quite fervent, when she had evidently failed to follow; it was as if he would have been impatient, only he knew he must not, because she was a lady and younger than himself, and he loved her.

They sat down just below my nook, and began to count the petals of a chicory flower, and slowly she nestled in to him, and he put his arm round her. Never did I see such sedate, sweet lovering, so trusting on her part, so guardianlike on his. They were like, in miniature---though more dewy,--those sober couples who have long lived together, yet whom one still catches looking at each other with confidential tenderness, and in whom, one feels, passion is atrophied from never having been in use.

Long I sat watching them in their cool communion, half-embraced, talking a little, smiling a little, never once kissing. They did not seem shy of that; it was rather as if they were too much each other's to think of such a thing. And then her head slid lower and lower down his shoulder, and sleep buttoned the lids over those chicory-blue eyes. How careful he was, then, not to wake her, though I could see his arm was getting stiff! He still sat, good as gold, holding her, till it began quite to hurt me to see his shoulder thus in chancery. But presently I saw him draw his arm away ever so carefully, lay her head down on the grass, and lean forward to stare at something. Straight in front of them was a magpie, balancing itself on a stripped twig of thorn-tree. The agitating bird, painted of night and day, was making a queer noise and flirting one wing, as if trying to attract attention. Rising from the twig, it circled, vivid and stealthy, twice round the tree, and flew to another a dozen paces off. The boy rose; he looked at his little mate, looked at the bird, and began quietly to move toward it; but uttering again its queer call, the bird glided on to a third thorn-tree. The boy hesitated then--but once more the bird flew on, and suddenly dipped over the hill. I saw the boy break into a run; and getting up quickly, I ran too.

When I reached the crest there was the black and white bird flying low into a dell, and there the boy, with hair streaming back, was rushing helter-skelter down the hill. He reached the bottom and vanished into the dell. I, too, ran down the hill. For all that I was prying and must not be seen by bird or boy, I crept warily in among the trees to the edge of a pool that could know but little sunlight, so thickly arched was it by willows, birch-trees, and wild hazel. There, in a swing of boughs above the water, was perched no pied bird, but a young, dark-haired girl with, dangling, bare, brown legs. And on the brink of the black water goldened, with fallen leaves, the boy was crouching, gazing up at her with all his soul. She swung just out of reach and looked down at him across the pool. How old was she, with her brown limbs, and her gleaming, slanting eyes? Or was she only the spirit of the dell, this elf-thing swinging there, entwined with boughs and the dark water, and covered with a shift of wet birch leaves. So strange a face she had, wild, almost wicked, yet so tender; a face that I could not take my eyes from. Her bare toes just touched the pool, and flicked up drops of water that fell on the boy's face.

From him all the sober steadfastness was gone; already he looked as wild as she, and his arms were stretched out trying to reach her feet. I wanted to cry to him: "Go back, boy, go back!" but could not; her elf eyes held me dumb--they looked so lost in their tender wildness.

And then my heart stood still, for he had slipped and was struggling in deep water beneath her feet. What a gaze was that he was turning up to her--not frightened, but so longing, so desperate; and hers how triumphant, and how happy!

And then he clutched her foot, and clung, and climbed; and bending down, she drew him up to her, all wet, and clasped him in the swing of boughs.

I took a long breath then. An orange gleam of sunlight had flamed in among the shadows and fell round those two where they swung over the dark water, with lips close together and spirits lost in one another's, and in their eyes such drowning ecstasy! And then they kissed! All round me pool, and leaves, and air seemed suddenly to swirl and melt--I could see nothing plain! . . . What time passed--I do not know--before their faces slowly again became visible! His face the sober boy's--was turned away from her, and he was listening; for above the whispering of leaves a sound of weeping came from over the hill. It was to that he listened.

And even as I looked he slid down from out of her arms; back into the pool, and began struggling to gain the edge. What grief and longing in her wild face then! But she did not wail. She did not try to pull him back; that elfish heart of dignity could reach out to what was coming, it could not drag at what was gone. Unmoving as the boughs and water, she watched him abandon her.

Slowly the struggling boy gained land, and lay there, breathless. And still that sound of lonely weeping came from over the hill.

Listening, but looking at those wild, mourning eyes that never moved from him, he lay. Once he turned back toward the water, but fire had died within him; his hands dropped, nerveless--his young face was all bewilderment.

And the quiet darkness of the pool waited, and the trees, and those lost eyes of hers, and my heart. And ever from over the hill came the little fair maiden's lonely weeping.

Then, slowly dragging his feet, stumbling, half-blinded, turning and turning to look back, the boy groped his way out through the trees toward that sound; and, as he went, that dark spirit-elf, abandoned, clasping her own lithe body with her arms, never moved her gaze from him.

I, too, crept away, and when I was safe outside in the pale evening sunlight, peered back into the dell. There under the dark trees she was no longer, but round and round that cage of passion, fluttering and wailing through the leaves, over the black water, was the magpie, flighting on its twilight wings.

I turned and ran and ran till I came over the hill and saw the boy and the little fair, sober maiden sitting together once more on the open slope, under the high blue heaven. She was nestling her tear-stained face against his shoulder and speaking already of indifferent things. And he--he was holding her with his arm and watching over her with eyes that seemed to see something else.

And so I lay, hearing their sober talk and gazing at their sober little figures, till I awoke and knew I had dreamed all that little allegory of sacred and profane love, and from it had returned to reason, knowing no more than ever which was which.
1912.

THE LEADING LADY

from *Buttered Side Down*

by Edna Ferber

Project Gutenberg EBook #352

The leading lady lay on her bed and wept. Not as you have seen leading ladies weep, becomingly, with eyebrows pathetically V-shaped, mouth quivering, sequined bosom heaving. The leading lady lay on her bed in a red-and-blue-striped kimono and wept as a woman weeps, her head burrowing into the depths of the lumpy hotel pillow, her teeth biting the pillow-case to choke back the sounds so that the grouch in the next room might not hear.

Presently the leading lady's right hand began to grope about on the bedspread for her handkerchief. Failing to find it, she sat up wearily, raising herself on one elbow and pushing her hair back from her forehead--not as you have seen a leading lady pass a lily hand across her alabaster brow, but as a heart-sick woman does it. Her tears and sniffles had formed a little oasis of moisture on the pillow's white bosom so that the ugly stripe of the ticking showed through. She gazed down at the damp circle with smarting, swollen eyes, and another lump came up into her throat.

Then she sat up resolutely, and looked about her. The leading lady had a large and saving sense of humor. But there is nothing that blunts the sense of humor more quickly than a few months of one-night stands. Even O. Henry could have seen nothing funny about that room.

The bed was of green enamel, with fly-specked gold trimmings. It looked like a huge frog. The wall-paper was a crime. It represented an army of tan mustard plasters climbing up a chocolate-fudge wall. The leading lady was conscious of a feeling of nausea as she gazed at it. So she got up and walked to the window. The room faced west, and the hot afternoon sun smote full on her poor swollen eyes. Across the street the red brick walls of the engine-house caught the glare and sent it back. The firemen, in their blue shirt-sleeves, were seated in the shade before the door, their chairs tipped at an angle of sixty. The leading lady stared down into the sun-baked street, turned abruptly and made as though to fall upon the bed again, with a view to forming another little damp oasis on the pillow. But when she reached the center of the stifling little bedroom her eye chanced on the electric call-button near the door. Above the electric bell was tacked a printed placard giving information on the subjects of laundry, ice-water, bell-boys and dining-room hours.

The leading lady stood staring at it a moment thoughtfully. Then with a sudden swift movement she applied her forefinger to the button and held it there for a long half-minute. Then she sat down on the edge of the bed, her kimono folded about her, and waited.

She waited until a lank bell-boy, in a brown uniform that was some sizes

too small for him, had ceased to take any interest in the game of chess which Bauer and Merkle, the champion firemen chess-players, were contesting on the walk before the open doorway of the engine-house. The proprietor of the Burke House had originally intended that the brown uniform be worn by a diminutive bell-boy, such as one sees in musical comedies. But the available supply of stage size bell-boys in our town is somewhat limited and was soon exhausted. There followed a succession of lank bell-boys, with arms and legs sticking ungracefully out of sleeves and trousers.

"Come!" called the leading lady quickly, in answer to the lank youth's footsteps, and before he had had time to knock.

"Ring?" asked the boy, stepping into the torrid little room.

The leading lady did not reply immediately. She swallowed something in her throat and pushed back the hair from her moist forehead again. The brown uniform repeated his question, a trifle irritably. Whereupon the leading lady spoke, desperately:

"Is there a woman around this place? I don't mean dining-room girls, or the person behind the cigar-counter."

Since falling heir to the brown uniform the lank youth had heard some strange requests. He had been interviewed by various ladies in varicolored kimonos relative to liquid refreshment, laundry and the cost of hiring a horse and rig for a couple of hours. One had even summoned him to ask if there was a Bible in the house. But this latest question was a new one. He stared, leaning against the door and thrusting one hand into the depths of his very tight breeches pocket.

"Why, there's Pearlie Schultz," he said at last, with a grin.

"Who's she?" The leading lady sat up expectantly.

"Steno."

The expectant figure drooped. "Blonde? And Irish crochet collar with a black velvet bow on her chest?"

"Who? Pearlie? Naw. You mustn't get Pearlie mixed with the common or garden variety of stenos. Pearlie is fat, and she wears specs and she's got a double chin. Her hair is skimpy and she don't wear no rat. W'y no traveling man has ever tried to flirt with Pearlie yet. Pearlie's what you'd call a woman, all right. You wouldn't never make a mistake and think she'd escaped from the first row in the chorus."

The leading lady rose from the bed, reached out for her pocket-book, extracted a dime, and held it out to the bell-boy.

"Here. Will you ask her to come up here to me? Tell her I said please."

After he had gone she seated herself on the edge of the bed again, with a look in her eyes like that which you have seen in the eyes of a dog that is waiting for a door to be opened.

Fifteen minutes passed. The look in the eyes of the leading lady began to fade. Then a footstep sounded down the hall. The leading lady cocked her head to catch it, and smiled blissfully. It was a heavy, comfortable footstep, under which a board or two creaked. There came a big, sensible thump-thump-thump at the door, with stout knuckles. The leading lady flew to answer it. She flung the door wide and stood there, clutching her kimono at the throat and looking up into a red, good-natured face.

Pearlie Schultz looked down at the leading lady kindly and benignantly, as a mastiff might look at a terrier.

"Lonesome for a bosom to cry on?" asked she, and stepped into the room, walked to the west windows, and jerked down the shades with a zip-zip, shutting off the yellow glare. She came back to where the leading lady was standing and patted her on the cheek, lightly.

"You tell me all about it," said she, smiling.

The leading lady opened her lips, gulped, tried again, gulped again--Pearlie Schultz shook a sympathetic head.

"Ain't had a decent, close-to-nature powwow with a woman for weeks and weeks, have you?"

"How did you know?" cried the leading lady.

"You've got that hungry look. There was a lady drummer here last winter, and she had the same expression. She was so dead sick of eating her supper and then going up to her ugly room and reading and sewing all evening that it was a wonder she'd stayed good. She said it was easy enough for the men. They could smoke, and play pool, and go to a show, and talk to any one that looked good to 'em. But if she tried to amuse herself everybody'd say she was tough. She cottoned to me like a burr to a wool skirt. She traveled for a perfumery house, and she said she hadn't talked to a woman, except the dry-goods clerks who were nice to her trying to work her for her perfume samples, for weeks an' weeks. Why, that woman made crochet by the bolt, and mended her clothes evenings whether they needed it or not, and read till her eyes come near going back on her."

The leading lady seized Pearlie's hand and squeezed it.

"That's it! Why, I haven't talked--really talked--to a real woman since the company went out on the road. I'm leading lady of the 'Second Wife' company, you know. It's one of those small cast plays, with only five people in it. I play the wife, and I'm the only woman in the cast. It's terrible. I ought to be thankful to get the part these days. And I was, too. But I didn't know it would be like this. I'm going crazy. The men

in the company are good kids, but I can't go trailing around after them all day. Besides, it wouldn't be right. They're all married, except Billy, who plays the kid, and he's busy writing a vawdeville skit that he thinks the New York managers are going to fight for when he gets back home. We were to play Athens, Wisconsin, to-night, but the house burned down night before last, and that left us with an open date. When I heard the news you'd have thought I had lost my mother. It's bad enough having a whole day to kill but when I think of to-night," the leading lady's voice took on a note of hysteria, "it seems as though I'd----"

"Say," Pearlle interrupted, abruptly, "you ain't got a real good corset-cover pattern, have you? One that fits smooth over the bust and don't slip off the shoulders? I don't seem able to get my hands on the kind I want."

"Have I!" yelled the leading lady. And made a flying leap from the bed to the floor.

She flapped back the cover of a big suit-case and began burrowing into its depths, strewing the floor with lingerie, newspaper clippings, blouses, photographs and Dutch collars. Pearlle came over and sat down on the floor in the midst of the litter. The leading lady dived once more, fished about in the bottom of the suit-case and brought a crumpled piece of paper triumphantly to the surface.

"This is it. It only takes a yard and five-eighths. And fits! Like Anna Held's skirts. Comes down in a V front and back--like this. See? And no fulness. Wait a minute. I'll show you my princess slip. I made it all by hand, too. I'll bet you couldn't buy it under fifteen dollars, and it cost me four dollars and eighty cents, with the lace and all."

Before an hour had passed, the leading lady had displayed all her treasures, from the photograph of her baby that died to her new Blanche Ring curl cluster, and was calling Pearlle by her first name. When a bell somewhere boomed six o'clock Pearlle was being instructed in a new exercise calculated to reduce the hips an inch a month.

"My land!" cried Pearlle, aghast, and scrambled to her feet as nimbly as any woman can who weighs two hundred pounds. "Supper-time, and I've got a bunch of letters an inch thick to get out! I'd better reduce that some before I begin on my hips. But say, I've had a lovely time."

The leading lady clung to her. "You've saved my life. Why, I forgot all about being hot and lonely and a couple of thousand miles from New York. Must you go?"

"Got to. But if you'll promise you won't laugh, I'll make a date for this evening that'll give you a new sensation anyway. There's going to be a strawberry social on the lawn of the parsonage of our church. I've got a booth. You shed that kimono, and put on a thin dress and those curls and some powder, and I'll introduce you as my friend, Miss Evans. You don't look Evans, but this is a Methodist church strawberry festival,

and if I was to tell them that you are leading lady of the 'Second Wife' company they'd excommunicate my booth."

"A strawberry social!" gasped the leading lady. "Do they still have them?" She did not laugh. "Why, I used to go to strawberry festivals when I was a little girl in----"

"Careful! You'll be giving away your age, and, anyway, you don't look it. Fashions in strawberry socials ain't changed much. Better bathe your eyes in eau de cologne or whatever it is they're always dabbing on 'em in books. See you at eight."

At eight o'clock Pearlie's thump-thump sounded again, and the leading lady sprang to the door as before. Pearlie stared. This was no tear-stained, heat-bedraggled creature in an unbecoming red-striped kimono. It was a remarkably pretty woman in a white lingerie gown over a pink slip. The leading lady knew a thing or two about the gentle art of making-up!

"That just goes to show," remarked Pearlie, "that you must never judge a woman in a kimono or a bathing suit. You look nineteen. Say, I forgot something down-stairs. Just get your handkerchief and chamois together and meet in my cubbyhole next to the lobby, will you? I'll be ready for you."

Down-stairs she summoned the lank bell-boy. "You go outside and tell Sid Strang I want to see him, will you? He's on the bench with the baseball bunch."

Pearlie had not seen Sid Strang outside. She did not need to. She knew he was there. In our town all the young men dress up in their pale gray suits and lavender-striped shirts after supper on summer evenings. Then they stroll down to the Burke House, buy a cigar and sit down on the benches in front of the hotel to talk baseball and watch the girls go by. It is astonishing to note the number of our girls who have letters to mail after supper. One would think that they must drive their pens fiercely all the afternoon in order to get out such a mass of correspondence.

The obedient Sid reached the door of Pearlie's little office just off the lobby as the leading lady came down the stairs with a spangled scarf trailing over her arm. It was an effective entrance.

"Why, hello!" said Pearlie, looking up from her typewriter as though Sid Strang were the last person in the world she expected to see. "What do you want here? Ethel, this is my friend, Mr. Sid Strang, one of our rising young lawyers. His neckties always match his socks. Sid, this is my friend, Miss Ethel Evans, of New York. We're going over to the strawberry social at the M. E. parsonage. I don't suppose you'd care about going?"

Mr. Sid Strang gazed at the leading lady in the white lingerie dress with

the pink slip, and the V-shaped neck, and the spangled scarf, and turned to Pearlle.

"Why, Pearlle Schultz!" he said reproachfully. "How can you ask? You know what a strawberry social means to me! I haven't missed one in years!"

"I know it," replied Pearlle, with a grin. "You feel the same way about Thursday evening prayer-meeting too, don't you? You can walk over with us if you want to. We're going now. Miss Evans and I have got a booth."

Sid walked. Pearlle led them determinedly past the rows of gray suits and lavender and pink shirts on the benches in front of the hotel. And as the leading lady came into view the gray suits stopped talking baseball and sat up and took notice. Pearlle had known all those young men inside of the swagger suits in the days when their summer costume consisted of a pair of dad's pants cut down to a doubtful fit, and a nondescript shirt damp from the swimming-hole. So she called out, cheerily:

"We're going over to the strawberry festival. I expect to see all you boys there to contribute your mite to the church carpet."

The leading lady turned to look at them, and smiled. They were such a dapper, pink-cheeked, clean-looking lot of boys, she thought. At that the benches rose to a man and announced that they might as well stroll over right now. Whenever a new girl comes to visit in our town our boys make a concerted rush at her, and develop a "case" immediately, and the girl goes home when her visit is over with her head swimming, and forever after bores the girls of her home town with tales of her conquests.

The ladies of the First M. E. Church still talk of the money they garnered at the strawberry festival. Pearlle's out-of-town friend was garnerer-in-chief. You take a cross-eyed, pock-marked girl and put her in a white dress, with a pink slip, on a green lawn under a string of rose-colored Japanese lanterns, and she'll develop an almost Oriental beauty. It is an ideal setting. The leading lady was not cross-eyed or pock-marked. She stood at the lantern-illuminated booth, with Pearlle in the background, and dispensed an unbelievable amount of strawberries. Sid Strang and the hotel bench brigade assisted. They made engagements to take Pearlle and her friend down river next day, and to the ball game, and planned innumerable picnics, gazing meanwhile into the leading lady's eyes. There grew in the cheeks of the leading lady a flush that was not brought about by the pink slip, or the Japanese lanterns, or the skillful application of rouge.

By nine o'clock the strawberry supply was exhausted, and the president of the Foreign Missionary Society was sending wildly down-town for more ice-cream.

"I call it an outrage," puffed Pearlle happily, ladling ice-cream like mad. "Making a poor working girl like me slave all evening! How many

was that last order? Four? My land! that's the third dish of ice-cream Ed White's had! You'll have something to tell the villagers about when you get back to New York."

The leading lady turned a flushed face toward Pearlie. "This is more fun than the Actors' Fair. I had the photograph booth last year, and I took in nearly as much as Lil Russell; and goodness knows, all she needs to do at a fair is to wear her diamond-and-pearl stomacher and her set-piece smile, and the men just swarm around her like the pictures of a crowd in a McCutcheon cartoon."

When the last Japanese lantern had guttered out, Pearlie Schultz and the leading lady prepared to go home. Before they left, the M. E. ladies came over to Pearlie's booth and personally congratulated the leading lady, and thanked her for the interest she had taken in the cause, and the secretary of the Epworth League asked her to come to the tea that was to be held at her home the following Tuesday. The leading lady thanked her and said she'd come if she could.

Escorted by a bodyguard of gray suits and lavender-striped shirts Pearlie and her friend, Miss Evans, walked toward the hotel. The attentive bodyguard confessed itself puzzled.

"Aren't you staying at Pearlie's house?" asked Sid tenderly, when they reached the Burke House. The leading lady glanced up at the windows of the stifling little room that faced west.

"No," answered she, and paused at the foot of the steps to the ladies' entrance. The light from the electric globe over the doorway shone on her hair and sparkled in the folds of her spangled scarf.

"I'm not staying at Pearlie's because my name isn't Ethel Evans. It's Aimee Fox, with a little French accent mark over the double E. I'm leading lady of the 'Second Wife' company and old enough to be--well, your aunty, anyway. We go out at one-thirty to-morrow morning."

EDWARD MILLS AND GEORGE BENTON: A TALE

from *The \$30,000 Bequest and Other Stories*

by Mark Twain

PG Etext #142

These two were distantly related to each other--seventh cousins, or something of that sort. While still babies they became orphans, and were adopted by the Brants, a childless couple, who quickly grew very fond of them. The Brants were always saying: "Be pure, honest, sober, industrious, and considerate of others, and success in life is assured." The children heard this repeated some thousands of times before they understood it; they could repeat it themselves long before they could say the Lord's Prayer; it was painted over the nursery door, and was about the first thing they learned to read. It was destined to be the unswerving rule of Edward Mills's life. Sometimes the Brants changed the wording a little, and said: "Be pure, honest, sober, industrious, considerate, and you will never lack friends."

Baby Mills was a comfort to everybody about him. When he wanted candy and could not have it, he listened to reason, and contented himself without it. When Baby Benton wanted candy, he cried for it until he got it. Baby Mills took care of his toys; Baby Benton always destroyed his in a very brief time, and then made himself so insistently disagreeable that, in order to have peace in the house, little Edward was persuaded to yield up his play-things to him.

When the children were a little older, Georgie became a heavy expense in one respect: he took no care of his clothes; consequently, he shone frequently in new ones, with was not the case with Eddie. The boys grew apace. Eddie was an increasing comfort, Georgie an increasing solicitude. It was always sufficient to say, in answer to Eddie's petitions, "I would rather you would not do it"--meaning swimming, skating, picnicking, berrying, circusing, and all sorts of things which boys delight in. But NO answer was sufficient for Georgie; he had to be humored in his desires, or he would carry them with a high hand. Naturally, no boy got more swimming skating, berrying, and so forth than he; no body ever had a better time. The good Brants did not allow the boys to play out after nine in summer evenings; they were sent to bed at that hour; Eddie honorably remained, but Georgie usually slipped out of the window toward ten, and enjoyed himself until midnight. It seemed impossible to break Georgie of this bad habit, but the Brants managed it at last by hiring him, with apples and marbles, to stay in. The good Brants gave all their time and attention to vain endeavors to regulate Georgie; they said, with grateful tears in their eyes, that Eddie needed no efforts of theirs, he was so good, so considerate, and in all ways so perfect.

By and by the boys were big enough to work, so they were apprenticed to a trade: Edward went voluntarily; George was coaxed and bribed. Edward

worked hard and faithfully, and ceased to be an expense to the good Brants; they praised him, so did his master; but George ran away, and it cost Mr. Brant both money and trouble to hunt him up and get him back. By and by he ran away again--more money and more trouble. He ran away a third time--and stole a few things to carry with him. Trouble and expense for Mr. Brant once more; and, besides, it was with the greatest difficulty that he succeeded in persuading the master to let the youth go unprosecuted for the theft.

Edward worked steadily along, and in time became a full partner in his master's business. George did not improve; he kept the loving hearts of his aged benefactors full of trouble, and their hands full of inventive activities to protect him from ruin. Edward, as a boy, had interested himself in Sunday-schools, debating societies, penny missionary affairs, anti-tobacco organizations, anti-profanity associations, and all such things; as a man, he was a quiet but steady and reliable helper in the church, the temperance societies, and in all movements looking to the aiding and uplifting of men. This excited no remark, attracted no attention--for it was his "natural bent."

Finally, the old people died. The will testified their loving pride in Edward, and left their little property to George--because he "needed it"; whereas, "owing to a bountiful Providence," such was not the case with Edward. The property was left to George conditionally: he must buy out Edward's partner with it; else it must go to a benevolent organization called the Prisoner's Friend Society. The old people left a letter, in which they begged their dear son Edward to take their place and watch over George, and help and shield him as they had done.

Edward dutifully acquiesced, and George became his partner in the business. He was not a valuable partner: he had been meddling with drink before; he soon developed into a constant tippler now, and his flesh and eyes showed the fact unpleasantly. Edward had been courting a sweet and kindly spirited girl for some time. They loved each other dearly, and--But about this period George began to haunt her tearfully and imploringly, and at last she went crying to Edward, and said her high and holy duty was plain before her--she must not let her own selfish desires interfere with it: she must marry "poor George" and "reform him." It would break her heart, she knew it would, and so on; but duty was duty. So she married George, and Edward's heart came very near breaking, as well as her own. However, Edward recovered, and married another girl--a very excellent one she was, too.

Children came to both families. Mary did her honest best to reform her husband, but the contract was too large. George went on drinking, and by and by he fell to misusing her and the little ones sadly. A great many good people strove with George--they were always at it, in fact--but he calmly took such efforts as his due and their duty, and did not mend his ways. He added a vice, presently--that of secret gambling. He got deeply in debt; he borrowed money on the firm's credit, as quietly as he could, and carried this system so far and so successfully that one morning the sheriff took possession of the establishment, and the two cousins found

themselves penniless.

Times were hard, now, and they grew worse. Edward moved his family into a garret, and walked the streets day and night, seeking work. He begged for it, but it was really not to be had. He was astonished to see how soon his face became unwelcome; he was astonished and hurt to see how quickly the ancient interest which people had had in him faded out and disappeared. Still, he MUST get work; so he swallowed his chagrin, and toiled on in search of it. At last he got a job of carrying bricks up a ladder in a hod, and was a grateful man in consequence; but after that NOBODY knew him or cared anything about him. He was not able to keep up his dues in the various moral organizations to which he belonged, and had to endure the sharp pain of seeing himself brought under the disgrace of suspension.

But the faster Edward died out of public knowledge and interest, the faster George rose in them. He was found lying, ragged and drunk, in the gutter one morning. A member of the Ladies' Temperance Refuge fished him out, took him in hand, got up a subscription for him, kept him sober a whole week, then got a situation for him. An account of it was published.

General attention was thus drawn to the poor fellow, and a great many people came forward and helped him toward reform with their countenance and encouragement. He did not drink a drop for two months, and meantime was the pet of the good. Then he fell--in the gutter; and there was general sorrow and lamentation. But the noble sisterhood rescued him again. They cleaned him up, they fed him, they listened to the mournful music of his repentances, they got him his situation again. An account of this, also, was published, and the town was drowned in happy tears over the re-restoration of the poor beast and struggling victim of the fatal bowl. A grand temperance revival was got up, and after some rousing speeches had been made the chairman said, impressively: "We are not about to call for signers; and I think there is a spectacle in store for you which not many in this house will be able to view with dry eyes." There was an eloquent pause, and then George Benton, escorted by a red-sashed detachment of the Ladies of the Refuge, stepped forward upon the platform and signed the pledge. The air was rent with applause, and everybody cried for joy. Everybody wrung the hand of the new convert when the meeting was over; his salary was enlarged next day; he was the talk of the town, and its hero. An account of it was published.

George Benton fell, regularly, every three months, but was faithfully rescued and wrought with, every time, and good situations were found for him. Finally, he was taken around the country lecturing, as a reformed drunkard, and he had great houses and did an immense amount of good.

He was so popular at home, and so trusted--during his sober intervals--that he was enabled to use the name of a principal citizen, and get a large sum of money at the bank. A mighty pressure was brought to bear to save him from the consequences of his forgery, and it was partially successful--he was "sent up" for only two years. When, at the

end of a year, the tireless efforts of the benevolent were crowned with success, and he emerged from the penitentiary with a pardon in his pocket, the Prisoner's Friend Society met him at the door with a situation and a comfortable salary, and all the other benevolent people came forward and gave him advice, encouragement and help. Edward Mills had once applied to the Prisoner's Friend Society for a situation, when in dire need, but the question, "Have you been a prisoner?" made brief work of his case.

While all these things were going on, Edward Mills had been quietly making head against adversity. He was still poor, but was in receipt of a steady and sufficient salary, as the respected and trusted cashier of a bank. George Benton never came near him, and was never heard to inquire about him. George got to indulging in long absences from the town; there were ill reports about him, but nothing definite.

One winter's night some masked burglars forced their way into the bank, and found Edward Mills there alone. They commanded him to reveal the "combination," so that they could get into the safe. He refused. They threatened his life. He said his employers trusted him, and he could not be traitor to that trust. He could die, if he must, but while he lived he would be faithful; he would not yield up the "combination." The burglars killed him.

The detectives hunted down the criminals; the chief one proved to be George Benton. A wide sympathy was felt for the widow and orphans of the dead man, and all the newspapers in the land begged that all the banks in the land would testify their appreciation of the fidelity and heroism of the murdered cashier by coming forward with a generous contribution of money in aid of his family, now bereft of support. The result was a mass of solid cash amounting to upward of five hundred dollars--an average of nearly three-eighths of a cent for each bank in the Union. The cashier's own bank testified its gratitude by endeavoring to show (but humiliatingly failed in it) that the peerless servant's accounts were not square, and that he himself had knocked his brains out with a bludgeon to escape detection and punishment.

George Benton was arraigned for trial. Then everybody seemed to forget the widow and orphans in their solicitude for poor George. Everything that money and influence could do was done to save him, but it all failed; he was sentenced to death. Straightway the Governor was besieged with petitions for commutation or pardon; they were brought by tearful young girls; by sorrowful old maids; by deputations of pathetic widows; by shoals of impressive orphans. But no, the Governor--for once--would not yield.

Now George Benton experienced religion. The glad news flew all around. From that time forth his cell was always full of girls and women and fresh flowers; all the day long there was prayer, and hymn-singing, and thanksgiving, and homilies, and tears, with never an interruption, except an occasional five-minute intermission for refreshments.

This sort of thing continued up to the very gallows, and George Benton went proudly home, in the black cap, before a wailing audience of the sweetest and best that the region could produce. His grave had fresh flowers on it every day, for a while, and the head-stone bore these words, under a hand pointing aloft: "He has fought the good fight."

The brave cashier's head-stone has this inscription: "Be pure, honest, sober, industrious, considerate, and you will never--"

Nobody knows who gave the order to leave it that way, but it was so given.

The cashier's family are in stringent circumstances, now, it is said; but no matter; a lot of appreciative people, who were not willing that an act so brave and true as his should go unrewarded, have collected forty-two thousand dollars--and built a Memorial Church with it.

IN THE PINY WOODS

By Mrs. B. F. Mayhew

from *Southern Lights and Shadows*

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A sparsely settled bit of country in the piny woods of North Carolina. A house rather larger than its neighbors, though only a "story and a jump" of four rooms, two upper and two lower, and quite a commodious shed on the back containing two rooms and a small entry; and when Jeems Henry Tyler increased his rooms as his family grew, his neighbors "allowed" that "arter er while he'd make er hotel out'n it." Several out-houses stood at convenient distances from the house. A rough board paling enclosed the yard. A clearing of twenty-five or more acres lay around three sides of the house, and well-to-do Industry and Thrift plainly went hand in hand about the place.

A Saturday in early autumn was drawing near its close, and the family had finished supper, though it was not yet dark. Like all country folk of their station in life, they ate in the kitchen, a building separate from the house. There were "Grandmother Tyler," a sweet-faced old woman, with silvery hair smoothed away under a red silk kerchief folded cornerwise and tied under her chin; and her son, "Father Tyler," with his fifty-odd years showing themselves in his grizzled hair and beard; and "Mother Tyler," a brisk stout woman, with great strength of character in her strong features, black eyes, and straight black hair. Her neighbors declared that she was the "main stake" in the "Tyler fence."

The children were "Mandy Calline," the eldest, and her mother's special pride, built on the same model with her mother; Joseph Zachariah, a long-legged youth; Ann Elisabeth, a lanky girl; Susan Jane, and Jeems Henry, or "Little Jim," to distinguish him from his father; and last, but by no means least in the household, came the baby. When she was born Mrs. Tyler declared that as all the rest were named for different members of both families, she should give this wee blossom a fancy name, and she had the desire of her heart, and the baby rejoiced in the name of Elthania Mydora, docked off into "Thancy" for short.

They had risen from the table, and Father Tyler had hastened to his mother's side as the old lady moved slowly away, and taking her arm, guided her carefully to the house, for the eyes in the placid old face, looking apparently straight before her, were stone-blind.

"Come, now, gals," said Mother Tyler, briskly, with the baby in her arms, "make er hurry 'n' do up th' dishes. Come, Ann Elisabeth, go ter scrapin' up, 'n', Mandy Calline, pour up th' dish-water."

"Ya'as, yer'd better make er hurry," squeaked "Little Jim," from his perch in the window, "fer Mandy Calline's spectin' her beau ter-night."

"Ye'd best shet up yer clatter, Jim, lest ye know what yer talkin' erbout," retorted Mandy Calline, with a pout, making a dash at him with the dish-cloth.

"Yer right, Jim," drawled Joseph Zachariah, lounging in the doorway. "I heerd Zeke White tell 'er he was er-comin' ter-night."

"Mar--" began Mandy Calline, looking at her mother appealingly.

"Shet up, you boys," came in answer. "Zachariah, ha' ye parted th' cows 'n' calves?"

"No, 'm."

"Then be erbout it straight erway. Jim--you Jeems Henry!"

"Ya'as, 'm," from outside the window.

"Go 'n' shet up the hen-'ouse, 'n' see ef th' black hen 'n' chickens ha' gone ter roost in there. She'll keep stayin' out o' nights till th' fox 'll grab 'er. Now, chillen, make 'er hurry 'n' git thee in here. Come, Thaney gal, we'll go in th' house 'n' find pappy 'n' gra'mammy. Susan Jane, come fetch th' baby's ole quilt 'n' spread it down on th' floor fer 'er"; and Mother Tyler repaired to the house with the baby in her arms.

"Why, mother, ye in here by yerself? I tho't Jeems Henry was with yer."

"Ya'as, Malviny, he was tell er minit ergo, 'n' he stepped out to th' lot," replied the old lady, in tones so like the expression of her face, mildly calm, that it was a pleasure to hear her speak.

"Ha" ye got thet baby wi' ye?"

"Ya'as, 'm."

"I wish ye'd put her on my lap. Gra'mammy 'ain't had 'er none ter-day."

"Ya'as, 'm, in er minit. Run, Susan Jane, 'n' fetch er cloth ter wipe 'er face 'n' han's; they're that stuck up wi' merlasses, ter say nothin' o' dirt. Therey, therey, now! Mammy's gal don't want ter hev 'er face washed? Hu! tu! tu! Thaney mustn't cry so. Where's Jeff? Here, Jeff--here, Jeff! Ole bugger-man, come down the chimbly 'n' ketch this bad gal. You'd better hush. I tell yer he's er-comin'. Here, Susan Jane, take th' cloth. There, gra'mammy; there's jest es sweet er little gal es ye'd find in er dog's age." And the old lady at once cuddled the little one in her arms, swinging back and forth in her home-made rocker, and crooning an old-time baby song.

"Here, Susan Jane, han' me my knittin' from th' table, 'n' go 'n' tell Jim ter pitch in some pine knots 'n' make er light in here, 'n' be quick erbout it"; and Mother Tyler settled herself in another home-made rocker and began to knit rapidly.

This was the night-work of the female portion of the family, and numerous stockings of various colors and in various stages of progress were stuck about the walls of the room, which boasted neither ceiling nor lath and plaster, making convenient receptacles between the posts and weather-boarding for knitting-work, turkey-tail fans, bunches of herbs for drying, etc.

A pine-knot fire was soon kindled on the hearth, and threw its flickering shadows on the room and its occupants as the dusk gathered in.

Mandy Calline and Elisabeth, running a race from the kitchen, burst into the back door, halting in a good-natured tussle in the entry.

"Stop that racket, you gals," called out the mother; and as they came in with suppressed bustle, panting with smothered laughter, she asked, briskly, "Have ye shet up everything 'n' locked th' kitchen door?"

"Ya'as, 'm," replied Mandy Calline; "'n' here's th' key on th' mantel-shelf." She then disappeared up the stairs which came down into the sitting-room behind the back door.

"Come, Ann Elisabeth, git yer knittin'. Git your'n too, Susan Jane."

"Yer'll ha' ter set th' heel fer me, mar," said Susan Jane, hoping privately that she would be too busy to do so.

"Fetch it here," from the mother, dashed the hope incontinently.

"I think we're goin' ter ha' some fallin' weather in er day er two; sky looks ruther hazy, 'n' I heerd er rain-crow ter-day, 'n' ther's er circle roun' th' moon," observed Father Tyler as he entered, and hanging his hat on a convenient nail in a post, seated himself in the corner opposite his mother.

"Ha' ye got th' fodder all in?" queried his wife, with much interest.

"Ya'as; finished ter-day; that's all safe; but er rain 'ould interfere mightily wi' pickin' out cotton up in th' swamp, 'n' it's openin, mighty fast; shouldn't be s'prised ef some er that swamp don't fetch er bale ter th' acre, 'n' we'll have er right purty lot o' cotton, even atter th' rent's paid out"; and Father Tyler, with much complacency, lighted his pipe with a coal from the hearth.

"Th' gals 'll soon ha' this erround th' house all picked out; they got purty nigh over it ter-day, 'n' ther'll likely be one more scatterin' pickin'," said Mother Tyler.

Here a starched rustling on the stairs betokened the descent of Mandy Calline. Pushing back the door, she stepped down with all the dignity which she deemed suitable to don with her present attire.

A new calico dress of a blue ground, with a bright yellow vine rambling up

its lengths, adorned her round, plump figure; her glossy black hair was plaited, and surmounted with a huge red bow, the ends of which fluttered out bravely; as she stepped slowly into the room, busying herself pulling a basting out of her sleeve.

"Well, Mandy Calline," began her mother, "ef I do say it myself, yer frock fits jest as nice as can be. Looks like ye had been melted 'n' run into it. Nice length, too," eying her critically from head to foot.

"Ya'as, 'm; 'n' it's comf'ble, too; ain't too tight ner nothin'," giving her shoulders a little twitch, and moving her arms a bit.

"I guess th' boys 'll ha' ter look sharp ef that gal sets 'er cap at any on 'em," put in Father Tyler, gazing proudly at his first-born, whereupon a toss of her head set the ribbon ends fluttering as she moved with great dignity across the room to the fireplace.

"Come, let me feel, dearie," said the old lady, softly, turning her sightless eyes toward the girl, hearing her movements in her direction.

"Ya'as, gra'mammy," and stepping nearer, she knelt at her grandmother's feet, and leaning forward, rested her hands lightly on her shoulders.

The old wrinkled hands groped their way to the girl's face, thence downward, over her arms, her waist, to the skirt of her dress.

"It feels nice, dearie, 'n' I know it looks nice."

"I'm glad ye like it, gra'mammy," said the girl, gently.

"Air ye spectin' comp'ny, dearie, that ye're all dressed up so nice? 'Pears like ye wouldn't put on yer new frock lest ye wer'."

Noting the girl's hesitation, the old lady said, softly, "Whisper 'n' tell gra'-mammy who's er-comin'"; and Mandy Calline, with an additional shade to the red in her cheeks, leaned forward and shyly whispered a name in her grandmother's ear.

A satisfactory smile broke like sunshine over the kind old face, and she murmured: "He's come o' good fambly, dearie. I knowed 'em all years ago. Smart, stiddy, hard-workin', kind, well-ter-do people. I've been thinkin' he's been er-comin' here purty stiddy, 'n' I knowed in my min' he warn't er-comin' ter see Zachariah."

Bestowing a kiss on one aged cheek and a gentle pat on the other, Mandy Calline arose to her feet, and lighting a splinter at the fire, opened the door in the partition separating the two rooms and entered the "parlor."

This room was the pride of the family, as none of the neighbors could afford one set apart specially for company.

It was the only room in the house lathed and plastered. Mother Tyler, who

was truly an ambitious woman, had, however, declared in the pride of her heart that this one at least should be properly finished.

Mandy Calline, with her blazing splinter, lighted the lamp, quite a gay affair, with a gaudily painted shade, and bits of red flannel with scalloped edges floating about in the bowl.

The floor was covered with a neatly woven rag carpet of divers gay colors. Before the hearth, which displayed a coat of red ochre, lay a home-made rug of startling pattern. The fireplace was filled with cedar boughs and sweet-smelling myrtle. Two "boughten" rocking-chairs of painted wood confronted each other primly from opposite ends of the rug. Half a dozen straight-back chairs, also "boughten," were disposed stiffly against the walls. A large folding-leaf dining-table of real mahogany, an heirloom in the family, occupied the space between two windows, and held a few scattered books.

The windows were covered with paper curtains of a pale blue tint. In the centre of each a festive couple, a youth and damsel, of apparently Bohemian type, with clasped hands held high, disported themselves in a frantic dance. These pictures were considered by the entire neighborhood as resting triumphantly on the top round of the ladder of art.

Both parlor and sitting-room opened on a narrow piazza on the front of the house, Father Tyler not caring to waste space in a hall or passage.

Mandy Calline had flicked a bit of imaginary dust from the polished surface of the table, had set a bit straighter, if that were possible, one or two of the chairs, and turned up the lamp a trifle higher, when "Little Jim" opened the door leading out on the piazza, and in tones of suppressed excitement half whispered, "He's er-comin', Mandy Calline; Zeke's er-comin'; he's nigh 'bout ter th' gate."

"Go 'long, Jim, 'n' shet up; ye allers knows more'n the law allows," said his sister; but she glanced quickly and shyly out of the door.

Mr. Ezekiel White was just entering the gate. He was undoubtedly gotten up at vast expense for the occasion. A suit of store clothes of a startling plaid adorned his lanky figure, and a pair of new shoes cramped his feet in the most approved style. A new felt hat rested lightly on his well-oiled hair. But the crowning glory was a flaming red necktie which flowed in blazing magnificence over his shirt front.

Jeff, the yard dog, barked in neighborly fashion, as though yelping a greeting to a frequent visitor whom he recognized as a favored one.

"Susan Jane," said the father, "step ter th' door 'n' see who Jeff's er-barkin' at."

Eagerly the girl dropped her knitting and hastened to reconnoitre, curious herself.

"It's Zeke White," she replied, returning to her work.

"I knowed Mandy Calline was spectin' him," muttered Ann Elisabeth, under her breath.

Father Tyler arose and sauntered to the door, calling out: "You Jeff, ef ye don't stop that barkin'--Come here this minit, sir! Good-evenin', Zekle; come in."

"Good-evenin", Mr. Tyler. Is Zachariah ter home?"

"I dun'no'. Malviny, is Zachariah erroun' anywher's 'at ye know of?"

"I dun'no'; I hain't seed 'im sence supper."

"I know," piped up "Little Jim." "He said es he was er-goin' ter Bill Jackson's. But, Zeke," he added, in a hurried aside, catching hold of the visitor's coat in his eagerness, "Mandy Calline's ter home, 'n' she's fixed up ter kill!"

At this juncture Mandy Calline herself appeared in the doorway, striving to look calmly indifferent at everything in general and nothing in particular; but the expression in her bright black eyes was shifty, and the color in her cheeks vied with that of the bow on her hair; and by this time Zekle's entire anatomy exposed to view shared the tint of his brilliant necktie.

"Good-evenin', Zekle," said the girl, bravely assuming a calm superiority to all embarrassment and confusion. "Will ye come in th' parlor, er had ye ruther set out on th' piazza?"

Zekle was wise; he knew that "Little Jim" dare not intrude on the sacred precincts of the parlor, and he answered, "I'd jest es live set in th' parlor, of it's all th' same ter you."

"Ya'as, I'd jest es live," she replied, and led the way into the room; he followed, and sat down in rather constrained fashion on the chair nearest the door, deposited his hat on the floor beside him, took from his pocket and unfolded with a flirt an immense bandanna handkerchief, highly redolent of cheap cologne, and proceeded to mop his face with it.

"It's ruther warm," he observed.

"Ya'as," she replied, from a rocking-chair in the corner facing him. Here there was a long pause, and presently she added, "Pappy said es how he tho't it mought rain in er day er two."

The family in the sitting-room had settled down, the door being closed between that room and the parlor.

"There, mother, gi' Thaney ter me," said Mother Tyler. "I know ye're tired holdin' of her, fer she ain't no light weight," and she lifted the little one away.

"Heigho, Thaney, air ye erwake yit?" questioned the father.

"Erwake! Ya'as, 'n' likely ter be," said the mother. "Thaney's one o' th' setters-up, she is."

"Give 'er ter me, Malviny. Don't pappy's gal want er ride on pappy's foot? See 'ere, now! Whoopee!" and placing the plump little body astride his foot, the leg of which crossed the other, and clasping the baby hands in his, he tossed her up and down till she crowed and laughed in a perfect abandon of baby glee. A smiling audience looked on in joyous sympathy with the baby's pleasure, the old gra'mammy murmuring softly, "It's like feelin' the sunshine ter hear her laugh!"

"There, pappy," said Mother Tyler, anxiously, "that'll do; ye're goin' ter git 'er so wide-erwake there'll be no doin' er thing with 'er. Come, now, Thaney, let mammy put ye down here on yer quilt. Come, come, I _know_ ye've forgot that ole bugger-man that stays up th' chimbly 'n' ketches bad gals! There, now, that's mammy's nice gal. Git 'er playthings fer 'er, Susan Jane. Jim, don't ye go ter sleep there in that door. Ha' ye washed yer feet?"

"No, 'm," came drowsily from the doorway.

"Why upon th' yeth do ye wait every blessed night ter be told ter wash yer feet? Go straight 'n' wash 'em, 'n' then go ter bed. Come, gals, knit ter th' middle 'n' put up yer knittin'; it's time for all little folks ter go ter sleep 'n' look for ter-morrer. 'Pears like Thaney's goin' ter look fer it with eyes wide open."

"Malviny, ye'll have ter toe up my knittin' fer me, Monday; I've got it down ter th' narrerin', 'n' I can't do no more," came softly from gra'mammy's corner.

"Ya'as, mother, I will; I could ha' toed it up this evenin' es well es not, tho' ef I had, ye'd ha' started ernuther, 'n' ye'd need ter rest; ye're allers knittin'."

"Ya'as, but, darter, it's all I kin do; 'n' I'm so thankful I kin feel ter knit, fer th' hardest work is ter set wi' folded han's doin' nothin'."

"Well, mother, it's but sildom that I ever knowed yer ter set with folded han's," remarked her son, with proud tenderness.

"Maybe, Jeems Henry; but I never tuck no consait ter myself fer workin', because I jest nachally loved it. Yer pappy use ter say I was er born worker, 'n' how he did use ter praise me fer bein' smart! 'n' that was sich er help! Somehow I've minded me of 'im all day ter-day--of th' time when he logged Whitcombe's mill down on Fallin' Crick. 'Twas--lemme see! Jeems Henry, ye're how ole?"

"Fifty-two my las' birthday."

"Well, that was fifty-one year ergo. You was all th' one I had then, 'n' yer pappy was erway from home all th' week, 'cept from Sat'day evenin' tell 'fore day Monday monrin'. Melindy White staid wi' me; she was Zekle's great-aunt, 'n' er ole maid, 'n' people did say she was monst'ous cross 'n' crabbed, but she warn't never cross ter me. I mind me of er Sat'day, 'n' I'd be spectin' of yer pappy home. I'd git up at th' fust cock-crow, 'n' go wake Melindy, 'n' she'd grumble 'n' laff all in er breath, 'n' say: 'Ann Elisabeth Tyler, ye're th' most onreasonablest creeter that I ever seed! What in natur' do ye want ter git up 'fore day fer? Jest ter make th' time that much longer 'fore Jim Tyler comes? I know ef I was married ter th' President I wouldn't be es big er fool es ye air.' But, la! she'd git up jest ter pleasure me, 'n' then sich cleanin' up, 'n' sich cookin' o' pies 'n' cakes 'n' chickens, 'n' gittin' ready fer yer pappy ter come!" And the placid old face fairly glowed with the remembrance. "'N' I mind me," she crooned on, "of th' time when ye fust begun ter talk; I was er whole week er-teachin' yer ter say two words; I didn't do much else. Melindy allowed that I'd gone clean daft; 'n' when Sat'day come, 'long erbout milkin'-time, I put on er pink caliker frock. I 'member it jest es well! it had little white specks on the pink; he bought it at Miggs's Crossroads, 'n' said I allers looked like er rose in it. I tuck ye in my arms 'n' went down ter th' bars, where I allers stood ter watch fer 'im; he come in er boat ter th' little landin' 'n' walked home, erbout er mile; 'n' when I seed 'im comin', 'n' he'd got nigh ernuff, I whispered ter ye, 'n' ye clapped yer little han's, 'n' fairly shouted out, 'Pappy's tumin'! pappy's tumin'!' Dearie me, dearie me; I kin see 'im now so plain! He broke inter er run, 'n' I stepped over th' bars ter meet 'im, 'n' he gethered us both in his arms, like es of he'd never turn loose; then he car'ied ye up to th' house on one arm, the other one roun' my wais', 'n' he made ye say it over 'n' over--'Pappy's tumin', pappy's tumin';' 'n' Melindy 'lowed we wer' 'th' biggest pair o' geese'; but we was mighty happy geese jest th' same."

There was a pause. They were all listening. Then she went on. "Somehow ter-day I felt like I use ter of er Sat'-day then, kinder spectin' 'n' light-hearted. I dun'no' why; I ain't never felt so befo' in all these years sence he died--forty-one on 'em; 'n' fifteen sence th' Lord shet down th' dark over my eyes, day 'n' night erlike. Well, well; I've had er heap ter be thankful fer; th' Lord has been good ter me; fer no mother ever had er better son than ye've allers ben, Jeems Henry; 'n' of Malviny had er ben my own darter, she couldn't er ben more like one; I've alleys ben tuck keer on, 'n' waited on, 'n' 'ain't never ben sat erside fer no one. Ya'as, th' Lord's ben good ter me." She began to fumble for her handkerchief.

"But, mother, ye don't say nothin' o' what er blessin' ye've ben to us," said her son. "Ye've teachd us many er lesson by yer patience in yer blindness."

"Ya'as, but, Jeems Henry, I had no call ter be nothin' else but patient; I had no call ter be onreasonable 'n' fret 'n' worry 'n' say that th' Lord had forsakened me when He hadn't. I knowed I'd only ter bide my time, 'n' I'm now near seventy-two year old. Dear, dear, how th' time goes! Seems like only th' other day when I was married! Was that nine the clock

struck?"

"Ya'as, 'm."

"Well, I b'lieve I'll git ter bed."

"Wait, mother, let me help yer," said her daughter, hastily throwing aside her knitting.

"We'll both help ye, mother," said her son, putting one arm gently around her as she arose from her chair.

"Well, well," she laughed, with soft content. "I sh'll be well waited on with two children 'stid er one; but none too many--none too many."

Zekle White had made brave progress from the chair by the door to the other rocker, drawn closely beside that of Mandy Calline; and he was saying, in tones that suggested an effort: "I've seed other young ladies which may be better-lookin' in other folkses' eyes, 'n' they may be more suiterbler ter marry, but not fer me. Thar ain't but one gurl in this roun' worl' that I'd ask ter be my wife, 'n', Mandy Calline, I've ben keepin' comp'ny wi' you long ernuff fer ye ter know that ye air th' one." He swallowed, and went on: "I've got my house nigh erbout done. Ter be sho', 'tain't es fine es this un, nor es big; but I kin add ter it, 'n' jest es soon es it is done I want ter put my wife in it. Now, Mandy Calline, what yer say--will yer be my wife?"

Mandy Calline looked shy--much like a young colt when it is going to break out of harness. She rocked back and forth with short spasmodic jerks, and twisted her handkerchief into all conceivable shapes.

"Yer don't know how sot on it I am," he went on; "'n' all day long I'm er-thinkin' how nice it 'll be when I'm er-workin', ploughin' maybe, up one row 'n' down ernuther, 'n' watchin' th' sun go down, 'n' lookin' forerd ter goin' ter th' house 'n' hev er nice little wife ter meet me, wi' everything tidied up 'n' cheerful 'n' comf'ble." Mandy Calline simply drooped her head lower, and twisted her handkerchief tighter. "Mandy Calline, don't yer say 'no,'" he said. "I love yer too well ter give yer up easy; 'n' I swear ef ye don't say 'yes,' I'll set fire 'n' burn up th' new house, fer no other 'oman sha'n't never live there. I'm er-waitin', Mandy Calline, 'n' don't, don't tell me no."

"Well, Zekle," she began, with much hesitation, "bein' es how I don't see no use in burnin' up er right new house, 'n' it not even finished, I guess es how--maybe--in erbout two or three years--"

"Two or three thunderations!" he cried out, ecstatically, seizing both her hands in his. "Yer mean two or three weeks! Mandy Calline, do ye mean ya'as, ye'll marry me? I want ter hear ye say it."

"Ya'as, Zekle," she said, shyly. "Whoopee! I feel like I'd like ter jump up 'n' knock my heels tergether 'n' yell!"

"Yer'd better try it er spell." she said, smiling at him shyly, "'n' jest see how soon ye'd ha' th' hull fambly er-rushin' in ter see what was the matter."

Hereupon came the ominous sound of Father Tyler winding the clock in the sitting-room; Zekle knew 'twas a signal for him to depart.

"Well," slowly rising, "I guess I got ter go, but I do mortally hate ter. Come ter th' door wi' me, Mandy Calline"; and taking her hand, he drew her up beside him, but she stood off a bit skittishly, and he knew that it would be useless to ask the question which was trembling on his lips, so, quick as a flash, he dropped one arm around her waist, tipped up her chin with the other hand, and kissed her square on the mouth before she fairly knew what he was about.

"You Zekle White!" she cried out, snatching herself from his arm and bestowing a rousing slap on his face.

"I knowed ye wouldn't give me one, so I tuck it jest so. Good-night tell ter-morrer, Mandy Calline; I'm goin' home 'n' dream erbout ye."

The next morning dawned bright and soft. A perfect September morning. Father Tyler and the boys were at the lot feeding and milking. Mandy Calline was cleaning up the house, her comely face aglow with her new-found happiness. Susan Jane attended to the baby, while Ann Elisabeth helped her mother "get breakfast."

"Gra'mammy was sleepin' so nice when I got up," said the girl, "that I crep' out 'n' didn't wake 'er. Had I better go see of she's erwake now, mar? Breakfus is nigh erbout done."

"Not yet. Go tell Mandy Calline ter git th' milk-pitcher 'n' go to the cow-pen 'n' fetch some milk fer breakfus. No tellin' when they'll git thoo out there. Then you hurry back 'n' finish fryin' that pan o' pertaters. No need ter 'sturb gra'mammy till breakfus is ready ter put on th' table; 'n' yer pappy 'n' th' boys'll ha' ter wash when they come from th' lot." And Mother Tyler opened the stove door and put in a generous pan of biscuits to bake.

Mandy Calline, with the milk-pitcher in her hand, hurried out to the cow-pen, which adjoined the stable lot. Her father was milking, Jim holding the calves. Zachariah was in the lot feeding the horse and pigs. She had just stepped over the bars into the pen, when who should appear, sauntering up, but Zeke White! He assumed a brave front, and with hands thrust in his pantaloons pockets, came up, whistling softly.

"Good-mornin', Zekle," greeted Father Tyler, rising from his stooping position.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Tyler. Fine mornin'."

"Ya'as; but I'm erfeared we're goin' ter hev rain in er day er two. I feel ruther rheumatically this mornin', er mighty shore sign that rain ain't fur off. Want milk fer breakfus, Mandy Calline? Well, fetch here yer pitcher."

A shy "good-mornin'" had passed between Mandy Calline and Zekle, and he sauntered up beside her, taking the pitcher, and as they stepped over the bars Father Tyler, hospitably inclined, said: "Take breakfus with us, Zekle? I lay Malviny 'll hev ernuff cooked ter give yer er bite."

With assumed hesitation Zekle accepted the invitation, and he and Mandy Calline passed on to the house, he carefully carrying the pitcher of milk.

He cleared his throat a time or two, and remarked again on the beauty of the morning, to which she rather nervously assented; then suddenly, the words seemingly shot out of him: "Mandy Calline, I'm goin' ter ask th' ole folks ter-day. What yer say?"

Mandy Calline was red as a turkey-cock, to which was now added a nervous confusion which bade fair to overwhelm her.

"It's too soon, Zekle. Whyn't yer wait er while?" she replied, tremblingly.

"No, 'tain't too soon," he answered, promptly. "I want it all done 'n' over with, then I sh'll feel mo' like ye b'long ter me. I'm goin' ter ask 'em ter-day; yer needn't say not. I know you're erfeared o' th' teasin'. But ye needn't min' that; ye won't hev ter put up wi' it long; fer th' way I mean ter work on that house ter git it done--well, 'twon't be long befo' it 'll be ready ter put my wife in it."

"Well, Zekle," said the girl, hesitatingly, "ef ye'd ruther ask 'em ter-day, why--I guess es how--ye mought es well do it. But let's go 'n' tell gra'mammy now; somehow I'd ruther she knowed it fust."

"We will," replied Zekle, promptly.

* * * * *

Mother Tyler was putting breakfast on the table. She suddenly paused and listened. Something was the matter. There were cries that betokened trouble. She hastened to the house, followed her husband and the boys on to gra'mammy's room, and there on the bed, in peaceful contrast to all this wailing and sorrow, lay dear old gra'mammy, dead. The happiest smile glorified the kind old withered face, and the wrinkled hands lay crossed and still on her breast. She had truly met the husband of her youth, and God had opened in death the eyes so darkened in life.

MARK TWAIN

from *Little Pilgrimages Among the Men Who Have Written Famous Books*

by E. F. (Edward Francis) Harkins

PG eBook #45610

Mark Twain's real name is Samuel Langhorne Clemens. There is a story to the effect that one of his ancestors, by name Gregory Clement, an adherent of Cromwell, added his voice to the condemnation of Charles I. and was beheaded for it by Charles II. However, it is neither as Clement nor as Clemens that the most celebrated of contemporaneous American authors is, or has been, popularly known, but by the pen-name of Mark Twain, which he adopted when he was piloting on the Mississippi, more than forty years ago.

In fun or in earnest--it is hard to fathom his moods--Mr. Clemens said lately that he was working on an autobiography which must not be opened until he has been in his grave for a century. So far as the main facts are concerned, however, the humorist's autobiography is already an open book. It has been chronicled piece by piece in a hundred magazines and in a thousand newspapers since 1868, when "Innocents Abroad" appeared, up to the present day. Probably no other living author has been so beset by the requests of editors and the importunities of reporters; and assuredly no other living author has been more amiable or more liberal in his responses. No, a good portion of the autobiography of Mr. Clemens, or Mark Twain,--we shall use each name impartially,--will be submitted to the public within a hundred hours after his death--and may that inevitable conclusion be far, far off!

As a man and as a writer Mr. Clemens has invariably carried the colors of the typical American. A stern sense of duty and of honor, a seldom absent sense of humor, inexhaustible energy, dauntless pluck, unfeigned simplicity and abiding sympathy and fidelity, are the salient characteristics of the typical American--of Mr. Clemens. At the same time, above and beyond the writer's unexcelled powers of observation and richness of imagination is his fine sense of artistry. "Mark Twain's humor will live forever," Mr. Howells is reported to have said some years ago, "because of its artistic qualities. Mark Twain portrays and interprets real types, not only with exquisite appreciation and sympathy, but with a force and truth of drawing that makes them permanent." So fastidious a critic as Prof. Barrett Wendell has lately dwelt on the constant and irresistible charm of Huckleberry Finn.

Mr. Clemens was born in a little Missouri village named Florida on Nov. 30, 1835. His father, John Marshall Clemens, of a good Virginia family, was one of the pioneers who, early in the century, crossed the Alleghanies and sought new fortunes in the unsettled West. His mother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Lampton, also, like her husband, came of good English stock. Her forefathers had plunged into the wilds with Daniel Boone; and she herself has been described as "one of those beautiful, graceful, and vivacious Kentucky girls who have contributed

so much to the reputation of that fortunate State." A cousin of Mr. Clemens, by the way, who was one of the humorist's playmates sixty years ago, is the Rev. Eugene Joshua Lampton, who, by some of the people in Missouri, is called "the Bishop of the diocese." Elder Lampton is the possessor of the original subscription list which Mr. Clemens carried when he was a newspaper boy in Hannibal. But this is reaching ahead a little.

They say that Mr. Clemens's mother was not only remarkably winsome but remarkably intelligent. When the author was a youngster one of his relatives said of him: "He's a perfect little human kaleidoscope." "Yes," added another, "and he gets that from his mother." Samuel's mother could "write well," which was no small accomplishment in the south-west in the thirties.

When Samuel was about nine years old his father decided to move to Hannibal, in the same State. The prime cause of this immigration was the failure of the elder Clemens to make Salt River navigable; hence, as one writer has suggested, the probable origin of the old synonym for disaster, "gone up Salt River."

Young Clemens was sent to school in Hannibal. Some of his schoolmates are living in the old town to-day. He seems to have enjoyed the rule of two teachers, Miss Newcomb and Miss Lucy Davis. Physically, he was not a strong boy, but intellectually he seems always to have been more than a match for any boy of his age. He had two brothers, Orion, who was considerably older, and Henry, who was the youngest of them all. Samuel attended school until his father died in 1847. The death of the father, who had just been elected county judge, was a hard blow to the family. After the death of his father, the subject of our sketch went to work for the local newspaper as a carrier. Afterward he served as "devil" and type-setter, and then, having completed his apprenticeship and thinking to better himself elsewhere, he set off on foot for the East. Doing odd jobs at the case and the press, he finally reached Philadelphia. Thence he went to New York. But the East did not please him, and at seventeen he was back in Hannibal.

He was now on his uppers, as the phrase is, and, in addition to its adventurous side, the financial side of steamboat life on the Mississippi magnetized him. There, for instance, was the pilot, the guide of the great smoking craft, a man who knew everything thought worth knowing, a man looked up to by every merchant, every traveler and every desperado. Samuel determined to become a pilot, and the picturesque Capt. Horace E. Bixby took him under his wing. In his "Life on the Mississippi" Mark Twain describes with all his eloquence the interesting and exciting life of a pilot on the treacherous river. And was not the pilot's a great and attractive post for a young man? "If you will take," says Mark, "the longest street in New York, and travel up and down it, conning its features patiently until you know every house and window and door and lamp-post and big and little sign by heart, and know them so accurately that you can instantly name the one you are abreast of when you are set down at random in that street

in the middle of an inky-black night, you will then have a tolerable notion of the amount and the exactness of a pilot's knowledge who carries the Mississippi River in his head. And then if you will go on until you know every street-crossing, the character, size and position of the crossing-stones, and the varying depth of mud in each of those numberless places, you will have some idea of what the pilot must know in order to keep a Mississippi steamer out of trouble. Next, if you will take half of the signs on that long street and _change their places_ once a month, and still manage to know their new positions accurately on dark nights, and keep up with these repeated changes without making any mistakes, you will understand what is required of a pilot's peerless memory by the fickle Mississippi."

The life on the river, with its ever-changing dramatic and entertaining incidents, awoke the young man's sleeping imagination--gave him a strong desire to put to use the modest literary methods which he had acquired as an itinerant printer. Mr. Howells, too, it will be noticed, first had the passion for authorship aroused in him by the types and the presses.

The first sketches which Mr. Clemens sent to the local papers were signed "Iosh," a meaningless signature, which quickly made the young author desire something better. The improvement came to him when one day he heard a "big black negro" who was taking soundings call out "Mark twain!" which meant that there were two fathoms of water. The call struck the pilot's fancy, and he kept it in mind for future use.

Mr. Clemens served in the pilot-house--one of the best school-houses in the world, it may be said--until the war broke out. Then he ran blockades for a while, and for two weeks he carried a gun in the Confederate army, under General Harris. The two weeks' service cooled his ardor, and he went farther west with his brother Orion, who, as a sympathizer with the Union side, had received an appointment as Secretary of the Territory of Nevada. Samuel was to act as his brother's secretary, but as in this office he did nothing and earned nothing, he, after an attempt at prospecting, joined the staff of the _Virginia City Enterprise_. It was as the _Enterprise's_ correspondent at the capital of the Territory, Carson City, that Mr. Clemens first used the striking pseudonym "Mark Twain." But he had no taste for routine work; or, rather, his manner of garnishing, often with his stinging satire, his routine work, did not suit the taste of the editor of the _Enterprise_, and at the end of six months Mark Twain stamped the dust of Nevada from his shoes and struck out for California, where he readily secured employment on the _Union_. In the spring of 1865 he took an interest with Bret Harte in a short-lived weekly called _The Californian_, and some of the humorous articles which he wrote for that publication were widely copied in the East. Later the _Union_ sent him to the Hawaiian Islands to describe the sugar industry. His work as a correspondent was very successful, and so was the lecture tour which he made in California when he returned.

Major Pond, by the way, relates that Mark Twain committed his lecture

to memory and was entirely confident of success; still, desiring to forestall even the possibility of failure, he arranged with some friend of his--Major Pond has forgotten her name--to sit in a box and start the applause if he should look in her direction and stroke his mustache. "Instead of failing, however," the Major reports, "the lecture started propitiously, and that caused Mark to forget his instructions to the lady. By and by, unconsciously, when the audience was filled to the neck with pleasure and sore with laughter, he unwittingly turned to the box where his friend sat and pulled his mustache. At the time he was saying nothing particularly good or funny, but the anxious lady took his action for the signal, and almost broke her fan on the edge of the box in a fury of applause." It took all the nerve which Mark had accumulated among the gamblers and crevasses of the Mississippi to pass through the embarrassment.

In 1867 Mr. Clemens published his first book, "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches," of which about four thousand copies were sold. That same year he went to Europe with the excursionists aboard the Quaker City.

This excursion proved to be the turning point in his career. He had a commission to write sketches of the journey for the *Alta Californian*. The sketches were duly published, and were then collected and offered to a publisher for marketing in book form. The material did not appeal to the publisher; it was startlingly uncut and undried. But Mark was insistent, and by and by the book appeared under the title of "Innocents Abroad." That book established Mark Twain's reputation as a humorist. During the thirty-three years which have intervened between that day and the present, Mark Twain's reputation has been maintained at a matchless height. No one has been deemed worthy by the reading public--which, after all, is the Supreme Court in literary matters--to be called his rival. And since the publication of "Innocents Abroad" Mark Twain's career has been public property, with no signs, no fences, not even a dog therein to bark at night.

Mark Twain's career stands unequalled in the literary history of America. He has been honored as an author and as a lecturer in almost every part of the world. He made a fortune and lost it; and now he is making another.

The literary historian must record in his case the prodigious achievement of an author remaining for at least thirty-three years--and who knows how many more will follow?--in almost steady demand in print and on the platform.

But in more than a literary sense was that excursion to Europe on the Quaker City the turning-point in Mark Twain's career, for it was on that memorable journey that he met Miss Olivia L. Langdon of Elmira, N. Y., who afterward became his wife; who is the subject of the most eloquent words which he ever penned, and who, if we are to believe their long-termed friend, Major Pond, "makes his works so great."

THE SEA-MAIDEN

from *Celtic Folk and Fairy Tales*

Editor: Joseph Jacobs

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There was once a poor old fisherman, and one year he was not getting much fish. On a day of days, while he was fishing, there rose a sea-maiden at the side of his boat, and she asked him, "Are you getting much fish?" The old man answered and said, "Not I." "What reward would you give me for sending plenty of fish to you?" "Ach!" said the old man, "I have not much to spare." "Will you give me the first son you have?" said she. "I would give ye that, were I to have a son," said he. "Then go home, and remember me when your son is twenty years of age, and you yourself will get plenty of fish after this." Everything happened as the sea-maiden said, and he himself got plenty of fish; but when the end of the twenty years was nearing, the old man was growing more and more sorrowful and heavy-hearted, while he counted each day as it came.

He had rest neither day nor night. The son asked his father one day, "Is any one troubling you?" The old man said, "Some one is, but that's nought to do with you nor any one else." The lad said, "I _must_ know what it is." His father told him at last how the matter was with him and the sea-maiden. "Let not that put you in any trouble," said the son; "I will not oppose you." "You shall not; you shall not go, my son, though I never get fish any more." "If you will not let me go with you, go to the smithy, and let the smith make me a great strong sword, and I will go seek my fortune."

His father went to the smithy, and the smith made a doughty sword for him. His father came home with the sword. The lad grasped it and gave it a shake or two, and it flew into a hundred splinters. He asked his father to go to the smithy and get him another sword in which there should be twice as much weight; and so his father did, and so likewise it happened to the next sword--it broke in two halves. Back went the old man to the smithy; and the smith made a great sword, its like he never made before. "There's thy sword for thee," said the smith, "and the fist must be good that plays this blade." The old man gave the sword to his son; he gave it a shake or two. "This will do," said he; "it's high time now to travel on my way."

On the next morning he put a saddle on a black horse that his father had, and he took the world for his pillow. When he went on a bit, he fell in with the carcass of a sheep beside the road. And there were a great black dog, a falcon, and an otter, and they were quarrelling over the spoil. So they asked him to divide it for them. He came down off the horse and he divided the carcass amongst the three. Three shares to the dog, two shares to the otter, and a share to the falcon. "For this," said the dog, "if swiftness of foot or sharpness of tooth will give thee aid, mind me, and I will be at thy side." Said the otter, "If the swimming of foot on the ground of a pool will loose

thee, mind me, and I will be at thy side." Said the falcon, "If hardship comes on thee, where swiftness of wing or crook of claw will do good, mind me, and I will be at thy side."

On this he went onward till he reached a king's house, and he took service to be a herd, and his wages were to be according to the milk of the cattle. He went away with the cattle, and the grazing was but bare. In the evening when he took them home they had not much milk, the place was so bare, and his meat and drink was but spare that night.

On the next day he went on further with them; and at last he came to a place exceedingly grassy, in a green glen, of which he never saw the like.

But about the time when he should drive the cattle homewards, who should he see coming but a great giant with a sword in his hand? "HI! HO!! HO-GARACH!!!" says the giant. "Those cattle are mine; they are on my land, and a dead man art thou." "I say not that," says the herd; "there is no knowing, but that may be easier to say than to do."

He drew the great clean-sweeping sword, and he neared the giant. The herd drew back his sword, and the head was off the giant in a twinkling. He leaped on the black horse, and he went to look for the giant's house. In went the herd, and that's the place where there was money in plenty, and dresses of each kind in the wardrobe with gold and silver, and each thing finer than the other. At the mouth of night he took himself to the king's house, but he took not a thing from the giant's house. And when the cattle were milked this night there _was_ milk. He got good feeding this night, meat and drink without stint, and the king was hugely pleased that he had caught such a herd. He went on for a time in this way, but at last the glen grew bare of grass, and the grazing was not so good.

So he thought he would go a little further forward in on the giant's land; and he sees a great park of grass. He returned for the cattle, and he put them into the park.

They were but a short time grazing in the park when a great wild giant came full of rage and madness. "HI! HAW!! HOGARAICH!!!" said the giant. "It is a drink of thy blood that will quench my thirst this night." "There is no knowing," said the herd, "but that's easier to say than to do." And at each other went the men. _There_ was shaking of blades! At length and at last it seemed as if the giant would get the victory over the herd. Then he called on the dog, and with one spring the black dog caught the giant by the neck, and swiftly the herd struck off his head.

He went home very tired this night, but it's a wonder if the king's cattle had not milk. The whole family was delighted that they had got such a herd.

Next day he betakes himself to the castle. When he reached the door, a little flattering carlin met him standing in the door. "All hail and good luck to thee, fisher's son; 'tis I myself am pleased to see thee; great is the honour for this kingdom, for thy like to be come into it--thy coming in is fame for this little bothy; go in first; honour to the gentles; go on, and take breath."

"In before me, thou crone; I like not flattery out of doors; go in and let's hear thy speech." In went the crone, and when her back was to him he drew his sword and whips her head off; but the sword flew out of his hand. And swift the crone gripped her head with both hands, and puts it on her neck as it was before. The dog sprang on the crone, and she struck the generous dog with the club of magic; and there he lay. But the herd struggled for a hold of the club of magic, and with one blow on the top of the head she was on earth in the twinkling of an eye. He went forward, up a little, and there was spoil! Gold and silver, and each thing more precious than another, in the crone's castle. He went back to the king's house, and there was rejoicing.

He followed herding in this way for a time; but one night after he came home, instead of getting "All hail" and "good luck" from the dairymaid, all were at crying and woe.

He asked what cause of woe there was that night. The dairymaid said, "There is a great beast with three heads in the loch, and it must get some one every year, and the lot had come this year on the king's daughter, and at midday to-morrow she is to meet the Laidly Beast at the upper end of the loch, but there is a great suitor yonder who is going to rescue her."

"What suitor is that?" said the herd. "Oh, he is a great General of arms," said the dairymaid, "and when he kills the beast, he will marry the king's daughter, for the king has said that he who could save his daughter should get her to marry."

But on the morrow, when the time grew near, the king's daughter and this hero of arms went to give a meeting to the beast, and they reached the black rock, at the upper end of the loch. They were but a short time there when the beast stirred in the midst of the loch; but when the General saw this terror of a beast with three heads, he took fright, and he slunk away, and he hid himself. And the king's daughter was under fear and under trembling, with no one at all to save her. Suddenly she sees a doughty handsome youth, riding a black horse, and coming where she was. He was marvellously arrayed and full armed, and his black dog moved after him. "There is gloom on your face, girl," said the youth; "what do you here?"

"Oh! that's no matter," said the king's daughter. "It's not long I'll be here at all events."

--"I say not that," said he.

"A champion fled as likely as you, and not long since," said she.

"He is a champion who stands the war," said the youth. And to meet the beast he went with his sword and his dog. But there was a spluttering and a splashing between himself and the beast! The dog kept doing all he might, and the king's daughter was palsied by fear of the noise of the beast! One of them would now be under, and now above. But at last he cut one of the heads off it. It gave one roar, and the son of earth, echo of the rocks, called to its screech, and it drove the loch in spindrift from end to end, and in a twinkling it went out of sight.

"Good luck and victory follow you, lad!" said the king's daughter. "I am safe for one night, but the beast will come again and again, until the other two heads come off it." He caught the beast's head, and he drew a knot through it, and he told her to bring it with her there to-morrow. She gave him a gold ring, and went home with the head on her shoulder, and the herd betook himself to the cows. But she had not gone far when this great General saw her, and he said to her, "I will kill you if you do not say 'twas I took the head off the beast." "Oh!" says she, "'tis I will say it; who else took the head off the beast but you!" They reached the king's house, and the head was on the General's shoulder. But here was rejoicing, that she should come home alive and whole, and this great captain with the beast's head full of blood in hand. On the morrow they went away, and there was no question at all but that this hero would save the king's daughter.

They reached the same place, and they were not long there when the fearful Laidly Beast stirred in the midst of the loch, and the hero slunk away as he did on yesterday, but it was not long after this when the man of the black horse came, with another dress on. No matter; she knew that it was the very same lad. "It is I am pleased to see you," said she. "I am in hopes you will handle your great sword to-day as you did yesterday. Come up and take breath." But they were not long there when they saw the beast steaming in the midst of the loch.

At once he went to meet the beast, but there was Cloopersteich and Claperstich, spluttering, splashing, raving, and roaring on the beast! They kept at it thus for a long time, and about the mouth of the night he cut another head off the beast. He put it on the knot and gave it to her. She gave him one of her earrings, and he leaped on the black horse, and he betook himself to the herding. The king's daughter went home with the heads. The General met her, and took the heads from her, and he said to her that she must tell that it was he who took the head off the beast this time also. "Who else took the head off the beast but you?" said she. They reached the king's house with the heads. Then there was joy and gladness.

About the same time on the morrow, the two went away. The officer hid himself as he usually did. The king's daughter betook herself to the bank of the loch. The hero of the black horse came, and if roaring and raving were on the beast on the days that were passed, this day it was horrible. But no matter, he took the third head off the beast, and

drew it through the knot, and gave it to her. She gave him her other earring, and then she went home with the heads. When they reached the king's house, all were full of smiles, and the General was to marry the king's daughter the next day. The wedding was going on, and every one about the castle longing till the priest should come. But when the priest came, she would marry only the one who could take the heads off the knot without cutting it. "Who should take the heads off the knot but the man that put the heads on?" said the king.

The General tried them, but he could not loose them, and at last there was no one about the house but had tried to take the heads off the knot, but they could not. The king asked if there were any one else about the house that would try to take the heads off the knot. They said that the herd had not tried them yet. Word went for the herd; and he was not long throwing them hither and thither. "But stop a bit, my lad," said the king's daughter; "the man that took the heads off the beast, he has my ring and my two earrings." The herd put his hand in his pocket, and he threw them on the board. "Thou art my man," said the king's daughter. The king was not so pleased when he saw that it was a herd who was to marry his daughter, but he ordered that he should be put in a better dress; but his daughter spoke, and she said that he had a dress as fine as any that ever was in his castle; and thus it happened. The herd put on the giant's golden dress, and they married that same day.

They were now married, and everything went on well. But one day, and it was the namesake of the day when his father had promised him to the sea-maiden, they were sauntering by the side of the loch, and lo and behold! she came and took him away to the loch without leave or asking. The king's daughter was now mournful, tearful, blind-sorrowful for her married man; she was always with her eye on the loch. An old soothsayer met her, and she told how it had befallen her married mate. Then he told her the thing to do to save her mate, and that she did.

She took her harp to the sea-shore, and sat and played; and the sea-maiden came up to listen, for sea-maidens are fonder of music than all other creatures. But when the wife saw the sea-maiden she stopped. The sea-maiden said, "Play on!" but the princess said, "No, not till I see my man again." So the sea-maiden put up his head out of the loch. Then the princess played again, and stopped till the sea-maiden put him up to the waist. Then the princess played and stopped again, and this time the sea-maiden put him all out of the loch, and he called on the falcon and became one and flew on shore. But the sea-maiden took the princess, his wife.

Sorrowful was each one that was in the town on this night. Her man was mournful, tearful, wandering down and up about the banks of the loch, by day and night. The old soothsayer met him. The soothsayer told him that there was no way of killing the sea-maiden but the one way, and this is it--"In the island that is in the midst of the loch is the white-footed hind of the slenderest legs and the swiftest step, and though she be caught, there will spring a hoodie out of her, and

though the hoodie should be caught, there will spring a trout out of her, but there is an egg in the mouth of the trout, and the soul of the sea-maiden is in the egg and if the egg breaks she is dead."

Now, there was no way of getting to this island, for the sea-maiden would sink each boat and raft that would go on the loch. He thought he would try to leap the strait with the black horse, and even so he did. The black horse leaped the strait. He saw the hind, and he let the black dog after her, but when he was on one side of the island, the hind would be on the other side. "Oh! would the black dog of the carcass of flesh were here!" No sooner spoke he the word than the grateful dog was at his side; and after the hind he went, and they were not long in bringing her to earth. But he no sooner caught her than a hoodie sprang out of her. "Would that the falcon grey, of sharpest eye and swiftest wing were here!" No sooner said he this than the falcon was after the hoodie, and she was not long putting her to earth; and as the hoodie fell on the bank of the loch, out of her jumps the trout. "Oh! that thou wert by me now, oh otter!" No sooner said than the otter was at his side, and out on the loch she leaped, and brings the trout from the midst of the loch; but no sooner was the otter on shore with the trout than the egg came from his mouth; He sprang and he put his foot on it. 'Twas then the sea-maiden appeared, and she said, "Break not the egg, and you shall get all you ask." "Deliver to me my wife!" In the wink of an eye she was by his side. When he got hold of her hand in both his hands, he let his foot down on the egg and the sea-maiden died.

THOUGHTS IN THE SUBWAY

from *Plum Pudding*

Of Divers Ingredients, Discreetly Blended & Seasoned

by Christopher Morley

PG eBook #15794

I

We hear people complain about the subway: its brutal competitive struggle, its roaring fury and madness. We think they have not sufficiently considered it.

Any experience shared daily and for a long time by a great many people comes to have a communal and social importance; it is desirable to fill it with meaning and see whether there may not be some beauty in it. The task of civilization is not to be always looking wistfully back at a Good Time long ago, or always panting for a doubtful millennium to come; but to see the significance and secret of that which is around us. And so we say, in full seriousness, that for one observer at any rate the subway is a great school of human study. We will not say that it is an easy school: it is no kindergarten; the curriculum is strenuous and wearying, and not always conducive to blithe cheer.

But what a tide of humanity, poured to and fro in great tides over which the units have little control. What a sharp and troubled awareness of our fellow-beings, drawn from study of those thousands of faces--the fresh living beauty of the girls, the faces of men empty of all but suffering and disillusion, a shabby errand boy asleep, goggling with weariness and adenoids--so they go crashing through the dark in a patient fellowship of hope and mysterious endurance. How can one pass through this quotidian immersion in humanity without being, in some small degree, enriched by that admiring pity which is the only emotion that can permanently endure under the eye of a questioning star?

Why, one wonders, should we cry out at the pangs and scuffles of the subway? Do we expect great things to come to pass without corresponding suffering? Some day a great poet will be born in the subway--spiritually speaking; one great enough to show us the terrific and savage beauty of this multitudinous miracle. As one watches each of those passengers, riding with some inscrutable purpose of his own (or an even more inscrutable lack of purpose) toward duty or liberation, he may be touched with anger and contempt toward individuals; but he must admit the majesty of the spectacle in the mass. One who loves his country for a certain candour and quick vigour of spirit will view the scene again and again in the hope of spying out some secrets of the national mind and destiny. Daily he bathes in America. He has that curious sense of mystical meaning in common things that a traveller feels coming home from

abroad, when he finds even the most casual glimpses strangely pregnant with national identity. In the advertisements, despite all their absurdities; in voices humorous or sullen; even in the books that the girls are reading (for most girls read books in the subway) he will try to divine some authentic law of life.

He is but a poor and mean-spirited lover--whether of his city, his country, or anything else--who loves her only because he has known no other. We are shy of vociferating patriotism because it is callow and empty, sprung generally from mere ignorance. The true enthusiast, we would like to think, is he who can travel daily some dozen or score of miles in the subway, plunged in the warm wedlock of the rush hours; and can still gather some queer loyalty to that rough, drastic experience. Other than a sense of pity and affection toward those strangely sculptured faces, all busy upon the fatal tasks of men, it is hard to be precise as to just what he has learned. But as the crowd pours from the cars, and shrugs off the burden of the journey, you may see them looking upward to console themselves with perpendicular loveliness leaping into the clear sky. Ah, they are well trained. All are oppressed and shackled by things greater than themselves; yet within their own orbits of free movement they are masters of the event. They are patient and friendly, and endlessly brave.

II

The train roared through the subway, that warm typhoon whipping light summer dresses in a multitudinous flutter. All down the bright crowded aisle of patient humanity I could see their blowing colours.

My eyes were touched with Truth: I saw them as they are, beautiful and brave.

Is Time never sated with loveliness? How many million such he has devoured, and must he take these, too? They are so young, so slender, so untutored, such unconscious vessels of amazing life; so courageous in their simple finery, so unaware of the Enemy that waits for us all. With what strange cruelties will he trouble them, their very gayety a temptation to his hand? See them on Broadway at the lunch hour, pouring in their vivacious thousands onto the pavement. Is there no one who wonders about these merry little hostages? Can you look on them without marvelling at their gallant mien?

They are aware of their charms, but unconscious of their loveliness. Surely they are a new generation of their sex, cool, assured, even capable. They are happy, because they do not think too much; they are lovely, because they are so perishable, because (despite their naïve assumption of certainty) one knows them so delightfully only an innocent ornament of this business world of which they are so

ignorant. They are the cheerful children of Down Town, and Down Town looks upon them with the affectionate compassion children merit. Their joys, their tragedies, are the emotions of children--all the more terrible for that reason.

And so you see them, day after day, blithely and gallantly faring onward in this Children's Crusade. Can you see that caravan of life without a pang? For many it is tragic to be young and beautiful and a woman. Luckily, they do not know it, and they never will. But in courage, and curiosity, and loveliness, how they put us all to shame. I see them, flashing by in a subway train, golden sphinxes, whose riddles (as Mr. Cabell said of Woman) are not worth solving. Yet they are all the more appealing for that fact. For surely to be a riddle which is not worth solving, and still is cherished as a riddle, is the greatest mystery of all. What strange journeys lie before them, and how triumphantly they walk the precipices as though they were mere meadow paths.

My eyes were touched with Truth, and I saw them as they are, beautiful and brave. And sometimes I think that even Time must be sated with loveliness; that he will not crumble them or mar their gallant childishness; that he will leave them, their bright dresses fluttering, as I have seen them in the subway many a summer day.

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

By O. Henry

from *Short Stories of Various Types*

Editor: Laura F. Freck

PG eBook #20831

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. To-morrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal

strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba^[13-1] lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still where a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie, Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain, simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be

Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror, long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--Oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please, God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't live through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas,' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice--what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim laboriously, as if he had not

arrived at that patent fact yet, even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there is anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, Oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hand under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the magi.

**THE VIRA CHARITA OR THE MAHAVIRA CHARITA
OR THE LIFE OF THE GREAT HERO.**

from *Tales from the Hindu Dramatists*

by R. N. Dutta, Editor: J. S. Zemin

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Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya (Oudh), is the father of four sons Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna. Rama and Lakshmana visit Viswamitra's hermitage. Kusadhwaja, the king of Sankasya and the brother of Janaka, the king of Mithila, accompanied by his two nieces, Sita and Urmila, enters the hermitage of Viswamitra on the borders of the Kausiki (Cosi), having been invited by the sage to his sacrifice. He is met by the sage with the two youths Rama and Lakshmana, and the young couples become mutually enamoured. Meanwhile Ahalya--the cursed wife of Gautama--gets cleared of her guilt through the purifying influence of Rama.

A messenger from Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, arrives, who has followed them from Mithila, and comes to demand Sita as a wife for his master.

They are further disturbed by Taraka, a female fiend, the daughter of Suketu, wife of Sunda and mother of Maricha. Rama, by command of Viswamitra slays her. Viswamitra is exceedingly pleased with the deed and invokes and gives to Rama the heavenly weapons with all their secrets of discharge and dissolution. The sage recommends Kusadhwaja to invite the bow of Siva for Rama's present trial, and consequent obtaining of Sita. The bow arrives, self-conveyed, being, as the weapon of so great a deity, pregnant with intelligence. Rama snaps it asunder, in consequence of which feat it is agreed that Sita shall be wedded to him; Urmila her sister, to Lakshmana; and Mandavi and Srutakirti, the daughters of Kusadhwaja, to Bharata and Satrughna respectively. The party is again disturbed by Suvahu and Maricha, the first of whom is killed and the second, thrown at a distance by Rama.

The messenger of Ravana then goes away mortified to represent the matter to the minister of Ravana. The saint and his visitors then retire into the hermitage.

Malyavan, the minister and maternal grandfather of Ravana and the king's sister Surpanakha have heard the news of Rama's wedding with Sita from Siddhasrama and discuss the consequences with some apprehension. The minister takes the marriage as an insult to his master.

A letter arrives from Parasurama partly requesting and partly commanding Ravana to call off some of his imps, who are molesting the sages in Dandakaranya. He writes from Mahendra Dwipa.

Malyavan takes advantage of this opportunity to instigate a quarrel between the two Ramas, anticipating that Parasurama, who is the pupil of Siva, will be highly incensed when he hears of Rama's breaking the bow of that divinity. The hero comes to Videha, the palace of Janaka, to

defy the insulter of his god and preceptor. He enters the interior of the palace, the guards and attendants being afraid to stop him, and calls upon Rama to show himself. The young hero is proud of Parasurama's seeking him and anxious for the encounter but detained awhile by Sita's terrors: at last the heroes meet. Parasurama alludes to his own history how he, having overcome his fellow-pupil, Kartikeya, in a battle-axe fight, received his axe from his preceptor, Siva, as the prize of his prowess.

Parasurama addresses Rama thus:--

"How dost thou presume to bend thy brow in frowns on me? Thou must be an audacious boy, a scion of the vile Kshatriya race. Thy tender years and newly wedded bride teach me a weakness I am not wont to feel.

Throughout the world the story runs, I, Rama, and the son of Jamadgni, struck off a mother's head with remorseless arm. This vengeful axe has one and twenty times destroyed the Kshatriya race, not sparing in its wrath the unborn babe hewn piecemeal in the parent womb.

It was thus I slaked the fires of a wronged father's wrath with blood, whose torrents, drawn unsparingly from martial veins, fed the vast reservoir in which I love to bathe."

Rama replies thus:--

"Give over thy vaunts--I hold thy cruelty a crime, not virtue."

The combat between the two Ramas is suspended by the arrival of Janaka and Satananda, and Rama's being summoned to attend the Kanchana Mochana, the loosening of Sita's golden bracelet.

Parasurama awaits Ramachandra's return. He is accosted in succession by Vasishtha, Viswamitra, Satananda, Janaka and Dasaratha, who first endeavour to soothe and then to terrify him; but he outbullies them all: at last Ramachandra returns from the string-removing ceremony and is heard calling on Parasurama, and the combat ensues. Ramachandra comes out victorious.

The two kings Janaka and Dasaratha congratulate each other on the victory of Ramachandra. Parasurama is now as humble as he was before arrogant: he calls upon the earth to hide his shame. Whilst Rama regrets Bhargava's departure, Surpanakha, disguised as Manthara, the favourite of Kaikeyi, Dasaratha's second wife, arrives with a letter to Rama, requesting him to use his influence with his father to secure Kaikeyi the two boons which Dasaratha was pledged to grant her; specifying one to be her son Bharata's inauguration, and the other, assent to Rama's voluntary exile. In the meantime, Dasaratha, who has determined to raise Rama to the participation of regal dignity, communicates his intention to his son. Rama replies by informing him of Kaikeyi's message, and is earnest with his father to accede to her request.

Bharata and his maternal uncle Yuddhajit arrive, and ask Dasaratha to crown Rama and all are full of wonder and concern: however, as there is no help for it, Dasaratha consents and orders preparations for the ceremony.

Lakshmana and Sita are alone to accompany Rama, on which her father Janaka exclaims, "My child, what happiness it will be to wait upon thy husband in the hour of trouble, permitted to partake and cheer his wanderings!" Bharata requests permission to go with them, but Rama refuses his assent; on which his brother begs his golden shoes of him, promising to instal them in the kingdom, and rule thereafter as their representative. The seniors are led out in deep despondency, and Rama with his brother and wife set off to the woods.

A dialogue opens between the two birds, Jatayu and Sampati, the vulture-descendants of Kasyapa, who have seen successive creations. They relate Rama's progress towards the south; and Sampati, the elder leaves his brother Jatayu, with strict injunctions to assist Rama, if needed. He then goes to the ocean to perform daily duties and Jatayu to Malaya. Jatayu perches on the mountain and marks the hero Rama in pursuit of the swift deer. Lakshmana directs his remote course thither. A holy seer approaches the bower and the dame gives him meet welcome. His form expands.

It is he, the felon Ravana--his train crowd from the groves; he seizes upon Sita--he mounts the car. Jatayu cries shame on his birth and threatens to rend his limbs and revel in his gore. Jatayu is, however, killed in the conflict. Rama raves with indignation. The brothers set off in pursuit of the ravisher, when Sramana, a female devotee sent by Vibhishana to Rama, calls for succour being seized by Kabandha, a headless fiend. Rama sends Lakshmana to her rescue; he goes off to kill the demon and returns with the dame. She gives Rama a note from Vibhishana praying for his refuge. Rama asks Lakshmana what reply to be sent to (his) "dear friend--lord of Lanka" and Lakshman replies that those words are sufficient.

(Two promises are implied--first contraction of friendship and secondly bestowal of the Kingdom of Lanka.)

Rama, learning from the devotee that Vibhishana is with Sugriva, Hanuman, and other monkey chiefs at Rishyamuka, and that the monkeys have picked up Sita's ornaments and upper garments in the forest, determines to go to them. Kabandha then appears, to thank Rama for killing him, being thereby liberated from a curse and restored to a divine condition.

They then set off to Rishyamuka, the residence of Bali, watered by the Pampa. In the way Rama performs a miracle by kicking away the skeleton of a giant.

When the brothers arrive at the mountain, Bali appears like a cloud upon its peak and, being instigated by his friend Malyavan, resolves to

oppose Rama. The heroes meet and, after exchange of civilities, go to the conflict.

The noise brings Vibhishana, Sugriva, and all the monkey chiefs to the place. Bali is overthrown and mortally wounded. He recommends the Monkeys to choose Sugriva and his own son Angada for their joint sovereigns, and mediates an alliance between Rama and them, as well as with Vibhishana. Rama and Sugriva pledge themselves to eternal friendship, over the sacrificial fire in Matanga's hermitage which stood close by. Bali then repeats his request to the monkey chiefs, as they were attached to him, to acknowledge Sugriva and Angada as their joint leaders, and to follow them in aid of Rama against Ravana in the ensuing contest: he then dies.

Malyavan laments over these miscarriages. Trijata, a Rakshasi, adds to his despondency by news of the mischief inflicted by Hanumana, who has burnt the town of Lanka and slain a son of Ravana. He goes off to set guards, and gather news by means of spies.

Ravana meditates on his love. His queen Mahodhari comes to bring him tidings of Rama's approach, but he only laughs at her. She tells him of the bridge made by Rama: he replies, if all the mountains of the earth were cast into the ocean, they would not furnish footing to cross it. His incredulity is terminated by a general alarm, and the appearance of Prahasta, his general, to announce that Lanka is invested. Angada comes as envoy from Rama, to command Ravana to restore Sita and prostrate himself and his family at the feet of Lakshmana. Ravana, enraged, orders some contumely or punishment to be inflicted upon him. He orders him to be shaved. Angada puffs his hair out with rage. The monkey tells Ravana, if he were not an ambassador, he would tear off his ten heads, and he then springs away; the tumult increases, and Ravana goes forth to the combat. Indra and Chiraratha then come to see the battle from the air.

All the chiefs of the two parties engage in promiscuous war. The Rakshasas have the worst, but Ravana, with his brother Kumbhakarna and his son Meghanada, turns the tide: the monkeys fly, leaving Rama almost unsupported. Lakshmana attacks Meghanada: Ravana quits Rama to assist his son.

The "serpent band" of Meghnada is dispersed by the "eagle-king-weapon" of Lakshmana. The forces of Kumbhakarna are reduced to ashes with a fire-weapon by Rama. Rama kills Kumbhakarna, and then goes to the aid of Lakshmana; the whole of Rama's party are then overwhelmed with magical weapons, hurled invisibly by Ravana upon them, and fall senseless. While Ravana seeks to restore Kumbhakarna, Hanuman, reviving, goes to fetch _amrita_, and tearing up the mountain that contains it, returns to the field: his very approach restores Lakshmana, who jumps up with increased animation, like a serpent starting from his shrivelled skin or the sun bursting from clouds. So Raghu's youngest hope, restored by heavenly herbs, burns with more than wonted ardour, wonders a moment what has chanced and then, all on fire for glory, rushes to the fight. Rama also revives, and instigated by the sages, exerts his celestial energies, by

which the daitya, Ravana, and his host speedily perish. Rama is victorious, and Sita is recovered.

Vibhishana is now crowned king of Lanka. Alaka, a tutelary deity, comes. Lanka, another tutelary deity, is consoled by Alaka.

Sita passes the fiery ordeal in triumph. The gods cheer her.

Rama, accompanied by Sita, Lakshmana, Vibhishana and Sugriva, then enters the aerial car Pushpaka which was once wrested from Kuvera by Ravana, and which is now placed at the disposal of Rama by Vibhishana. The car transports them from Ceylon all the way to Ayodhya. One or other of the party points out the places over which they fly viz. the _Setu_ or bridge of Rama the Malaya mountain, the Kaveri river, the hermitage of Agastya, the Pampa river, the residence of Bali and of Jatayu, the limits of the Dandaka forest, the Sahya or Sailadri mountains and the boundaries of Aryavarta.

They then rise and travel through the upper air, approaching near the sun, and are met and eulogized by a _Kinnara_ and his bride; they then come to the peaks of the Himalaya, and descend upon Tapavana, whence they go towards Ayodhya, where Rama is welcomed by his brothers Bharata and Satrughna, their mothers, Vasistha and Viswamitra.

The four brothers embrace one another. Rama is now consecrated king by Vasishtha and Viswamitra.

THE GRAY WOLFS HA'NTfrom *The Conjure Woman*

by Charles W. Chesnutt

from PG EBook #11666

It was a rainy day at the vineyard. The morning had dawned bright and clear. But the sky had soon clouded, and by nine o'clock there was a light shower, followed by others at brief intervals. By noon the rain had settled into a dull, steady downpour. The clouds hung low, and seemed to grow denser instead of lighter as they discharged their watery burden, and there was now and then a muttering of distant thunder. Outdoor work was suspended, and I spent most of the day at the house, looking over my accounts and bringing up some arrears of correspondence.

Towards four o'clock I went out on the piazza, which was broad and dry, and less gloomy than the interior of the house, and composed myself for a quiet smoke. I had lit my cigar and opened the volume I was reading at that time, when my wife, whom I had left dozing on a lounge, came out and took a rocking-chair near me.

"I wish you would talk to me, or read to me—or something," she exclaimed petulantly. "It's awfully dull here today."

"I'll read to you with pleasure," I replied, and began at the point where I had found my bookmark:—

"The difficulty of dealing with transformations so many-sided as those which all existences have undergone, or are undergoing, is such as to make a complete and deductive interpretation almost hopeless. So to grasp the total process of redistribution of matter and motion as to see simultaneously its several necessary results in their actual interdependence is scarcely possible. There is, however, a mode of rendering the process as a whole tolerably comprehensible. Though the genesis of the rearrangement of every evolving aggregate is in itself one, it presents to our intelligence"—

"John," interrupted my wife, "I wish you would stop reading that nonsense and see who that is coming up the lane."

I closed my book with a sigh. I had never been able to interest my wife in the study of philosophy, even when presented in the simplest and most lucid form.

Some one was coming up the lane; at least, a huge faded cotton umbrella was making progress toward the house, and beneath it a pair of nether extremities in trousers was discernible. Any doubt in my mind as to whose they were was soon resolved when Julius reached the steps and, putting the umbrella down, got a good dash of the rain as he stepped up on the porch.

"Why in the world, Julius," I asked, "didn't you keep the umbrella up until you got under cover?"

"It's bad luck, suh, ter raise a' umbrella in de house, en w'iles I dunno whuther it's bad luck ter kyar one inter de piazzer er no, I 'lows it's alluz bes' ter be on de safe side. I did n' s'pose you en young missis 'u'd be gwine on yo' drible ter-day, but bein' ez it's my pa't ter take you ef you does, I 'lowed I 'd repo't fer dooty, en let you say whuther er no you wants ter go."

"I'm glad you came, Julius," I responded. "We don't want to go driving, of course, in the rain, but I should like to consult you about another matter. I'm thinking of taking in a piece of new ground. What do you

imagine it would cost to have that neck of woods down by the swamp cleared up?"

The old man's countenance assumed an expression of unwonted seriousness, and he shook his head doubtfully.

"I dunno 'bout dat, suh. It mought cos' mo', en it mought cos' less, ez fuh ez money is consarned. I ain' denyin' you could cl'ar up dat trac' er Ian' fer a hund'ed er a couple er hund'ed dollahs, — ef you wants ter cl'ar it up. But ef dat 'uz my trac' er Ian', I would n' 'sturb it, no, suh, I would n'; sho 's you bawn, I would n'."

"But why not?" I asked.

"It ain' fittin' fer grapes, fer noo groun' nebber is."

"I know it, but" —

"It ain' no yeathly good fer cotton, 'ca'se it's top low."

"Perhaps so; but it will raise splendid corn."

"I dunno," rejoined Julius deprecatorily. "It's so nigh de swamp dat de 'coons'll eat up all de cawn."

"I think I'll risk it," I answered.

"Well, suh," said Julius, "I wushes you much joy er yo' job. Ef you has bad luck er sickness er trouble er any kin', doan blame me. You can't say ole Julius did n' wa'n you."

"Warn him of what, Uncle Julius?" asked my wife.

"Er de bad luck w'at follers folks w'at 'sturbs dat trac' er Ian'. Dey is snakes en sco'pions in dem woods. En ef you manages ter 'scape de p'isen animals, you is des boun' ter hab a ha'nt ter settle wid, — ef you doan hab two."

"Whose haunt?" my wife demanded, with growing interest.

"De gray wolf's ha'nt, some folks calls it, — but I knows better."

"Tell us about it, Uncle Julius," said my wife. "A story will be a godsend to-day."

It was not difficult to induce the old man to tell a story, if he were in a reminiscent mood. Of tales of the old slavery days he seemed indeed to possess an exhaustless store, — some weirdly grotesque, some broadly humorous; some bearing the stamp of truth, faint, perhaps, but still discernible; others palpable inventions, whether his own or not we never knew, though his fancy doubtless embellished them. But even the wildest was not without an element of pathos, — the tragedy, it might be, of the story itself; the shadow, never absent, of slavery and of ignorance; the sadness, always, of life as seen by the fading light of an old man's memory.

"Way back yander befo' de wah," began Julius, "ole Mars Dugal' McAdoo useter own a nigger name' Dan. Dan wuz big en strong en hearty en peaceable en good-nachu'd most er de time, but dange'ous ter aggrivate. He alluz done his task, en nebber had no trouble wid de w'ite folks, but woe be unter de nigger w'at 'lowed he c'd fool wid Dan, fer he wuz mos' sho' ter git a good lammin'. Soon ez eve'ybody foun' Dan out, dey did n' many un 'em 'temp' ter 'sturb 'im. De one dat did would 'a' wush' he had n', ef he could 'a'

libbed long ernuff ter do any wushin'.

"It all happen' dis erway. Dey wuz a cunjuh man w'at libbed ober t' other side er de Lumbe'ton Road. He had be'n de only cunjuh doctor in de naberhood fer lo! dese many yeahs, 'tel ole Aun' Peggy sot up in de bizness down by de Wim'l'ton Road. Dis cunjuh man had a son w'at libbed wid 'im, en it wuz dis yer son w'at got mix' up wid Dan, — en all 'bout a 'oman.

"Dey wuz a gal on de plantation name' Mahaly. She wuz a monst'us lackly gal, — tall en soopl', wid big eyes, en a small foot, en a lively tongue, en w'en Dan tuk ter gwine wid 'er eve'ybody 'lowed dey wuz well match', en none er de yuther nigger men on de plantation das' ter go nigh her, fer dey wuz all feared er Dan.

"Now, it happen' dat dis yer cunjuh man's son wuz gwine 'long de road one day, w'en who sh'd come pas' but Mahaly. En de minute dis man sot eyes on Mahaly, he 'lowed he wuz gwine ter hab her fer hisse'f. He come up side er her en 'mence' ter talk ter her; but she didn' paid no 'tention ter 'im, fer she wuz studyin' 'bout Dan, en she did n' lack dis nigger's looks nohow. So w'en she got ter whar she wuz gwine, dis yer man wa'n't no fu'ther 'long dan he wuz w'en he sta'ted.

"Co'se, atter he had made up his min' fer ter git Mahaly, he 'mence' ter 'quire 'roun', en soon foun' out all 'bout Dan, en w'at a dange'ous nigger he wuz. But dis man 'lowed his daddy wuz a cunjuh man, en so he 'd come out all right in de een'; en he kep' right on atter Mahaly. Meanw'iles Dan's marster had said dey could git married ef dey wanter, en so Dan en Mahaly had tuk up wid one ernudder, en wuz libbin' in a cabin by deyse'ves, en wuz des wrop' up in one ernudder.

"But dis yer cunjuh man's son did n' 'pear ter min' Dan's takin' up wid Mahaly, en he kep' on hangin' 'roun' des de same, 'tel fin'lly one day Mahaly sez ter Dan, sez she: —

"I wush you 'd do sump'n ter stop dat free nigger man fum follerin' me 'roun'. I doan lack him nohow, en I ain' got no time fer ter was'e wid no man but you.'

"Co'se Dan got mad w'en he heared 'bout dis man pest'rin' Mahaly, en de nex' night, w'en he seed dis nigger comin' 'long de road, he up en ax' 'im w'at he mean by hangin' 'roun' his 'oman. De man did n' 'spon' ter suit Dan, en one wo'd led ter ernudder, 'tel bimeby dis cunjuh man's son pull' out a knife en sta'ted ter stick it in Dan; but befo' he could git it drawed good, Dan haul' off en hit 'im in de head so ha'd dat he nebber got up. Dan 'lowed he 'd come to atter a w'ile en go 'long 'bout his bizness, so he went off en lef 'im layin' dere on de groun'.

"De nex' mawnin' de man wuz foun' dead. Dey wuz a great 'miration made 'bout it, but Dan did n' say nuffin, en none er de yuther niggers had n' seed de fight, so dey wa'n't no way ter tell who done de killin'. En bein' ez it wuz a free nigger, en dey wa'n't no w'ite folks 'speshly int'rusted, dey wa'n't nuffin done 'bout it, en de cunjuh man come en tuk his son en kyared 'im 'way en buried 'im.

"Now, Dan had n' meant ter kill dis nigger, en w'iles he knowed de man had n' got no mo' d'n he desarved, Dan 'mence' ter worry mo' er less. Fer he knowed dis man's daddy would wuk his roots en prob'ly fin' out who had killt 'is son, en make all de trouble fer 'im he could. En Dan kep' on studyin' 'bout dis 'tel he got so he did n' ha'dly das' ter eat er drink fer fear dis cunjuh man had p'isen' de vittles er de water. Fin'lly he 'lowed he 'd go ter see Aun' Peggy, de noo cunjuh 'oman w'at had moved down by de Wim'l'ton Road, en ax her fer ter do sump'n ter pertec' 'im fum dis cunjuh man. So he tuk a peck er 'taters en went down ter her cabin one night.

"Aun' Peggy heared his tale, en den sez she:—

"'Dat cunjuh man is mo' d'n twice't ez ole ez I is, en he kin make monst'us powe'ful goopher. W'at you needs is a life-cha'm, en I'll make you one ter-morrer; it's de on'y thing w'at'll do you any good. You leabe me a couple er ha'rs fum yo' head, en fetch me a pig ter-morrer night fer ter roas', en w'en you come I'll hab de cha'm all ready fer you.'

"So Dan went down ter Aun' Peggy de nex' night,—wid a young shote,—en Aun' Peggy gun 'im de cha'm. She had tuk de ha'rs Dan had lef wid 'er, en a piece er red flannin, en some roots en yarbs, en had put 'em in a little bag made out'n 'coon-skin.

"'You take dis cha'm,' sez she, 'en put it in a bottle er a tin box, en bury it deep unner de root er a live-oak tree, en ez long ez it stays dere safe en soun', dey ain' no p'isen kin p'isen you, dey ain' no rattlesnake kin bite you, dey ain' no sco'pion kin sting you. Dis yere cunjuh man mought do one thing er 'nudder ter you, but he can't kill you. So you neenter be at all skeered, but go 'long 'bout yo' bizness en doan bother yo' min'.'

"So Dan went down by de ribber, en 'way up on de bank he buried de cha'm deep unner de root er a live-oak tree, en kivered it up en stomp' de dirt down en scattered leaves ober de spot, en den went home wid his min' easy.

"Sho' 'nuff, dis yer cunjuh man wukked his roots, des ez Dan had 'spected he would, en soon l'arn' who killt his son. En co'se he made up his min' fer ter git eben wid Dan. So he sont a rattlesnake fer ter sting 'im, but de rattlesnake say de nigger's heel wuz so ha'd he could n' git his sting in. Den he sont his jay-bird fer ter put p'isen in Dan's vittles, but de p'isen did n' wuk. Den de cunjuh man 'low' he'd double Dan all up wid de rheumatiz, so he could n' git 'is ban' ter his mouf ter eat, en would hafter sta've ter def; but Dan went ter Aun' Peggy, en she gun 'im a 'intment ter kyo de rheumatiz. Den de cunjuh man 'lowed he 'd bu'n Dan up wid a fever, but Aun' Peggy tol' 'im how ter make some yarb tea fer dat. Nuffin dis man tried would kill Dan, so fin'lly de cunjuh man 'lowed Dan mus' hab a life-cha'm.

"Now, dis yer jay-bird de cunjuh man had wuz a monst'us sma't creeter,—fac', de niggers 'lowed he wuz de ole Debbil hisse'f, des settin' roun' waitin' ter kyar dis ole man erway w'en he 'd retch' de een' er his rope. De cunjuh man sont dis jay-bird fer ter watch Dan en fin' out whar he kep' his cha'm. De jay-bird hung roun' Dan fer a week er so, en one day he seed Dan go down by de ribber en look at a live-oak tree; en den de jay-bird went back ter his marster, en tol' 'im he 'spec' de nigger kep' his life-cha'm under dat tree.

"De cunjuh man lafft en lafft, en he put on his bigges' pot, en fill' it wid his stronges' roots, en b'iled it en b'iled it, 'tel bimeby de win' blowed en blowed, 'tel it blowed down de live-oak tree. Den he stirred some more roots in de pot, en it rained en rained 'tel de water run down de ribber bank en wash' Dan's life-cha'm inter de ribber, en de bottle went bobbin' down de current des ez onconsarned ez ef it wa'n't takin' po' Dan's chances all 'long wid it. En den de cunjuh man lafft some mo', en 'lowed ter hisse'f dat he wuz gwine ter fix Dan now, sho' 'nuff; he wa'n't gwine ter kill 'im des yet, fer he could do sump'n ter 'im w'at would hu't wusser 'n killin'.

"So dis cunjuh man 'mence' by gwine up ter Dan's cabin eve'y night, en takin' Dan out in his sleep en ridin' 'im roun' de roads en fiel's ober de rough groun'. In de mawnin' Dan would be ez ti'ed ez ef he had n' be'n ter sleep. Dis kin' er thing kep' up fer a week er so, en Dan had des 'bout made up his min' fer ter go en see Aun' Peggy ag'in, w'en who sh'd he come across, gwine 'long de road one day, to'ds sundown, but dis yer cunjuh man. Dan felt kinder skeered at fus; but den he 'membered 'bout his life-cha'm, w'ich he had n' be'n ter see fer a week er so, en 'lowed wuz safe en soun' unner de live-oak tree, en so he hilt up 'is head en walk' 'long, des lack he did n' keer nuffin 'bout dis man no mo' d'n any yuther nigger. Wen he got close ter

de cunjuh man, dis cunjuh man sez, sezee: —

"Hoddy, Brer Dan? I hopes you er well?"

"Wen Dan seed de cunjuh man wuz in a good humor en did n' 'pear ter bear no malice, Dan 'lowed mebbe de cunjuh man had n' foun' out who killt his son, en so he 'termine' fer ter let on lack he did n' know nuffin, en so sezee: —

"Hoddy, Unk' Jube?" — dis ole cunjuh man's name wuz Jube. 'I 's p'utty well, I thank you. How is you feelin' dis mawnin'?"

"'Ts feelin' ez well ez a' ole nigger could feel w'at had los' his only son, en his main 'pen'ence in 'is ole age.

"'But den my son wuz a bad boy,' sezee, 'en I could n' 'spec' nuffin e'se. I tried ter l'arn him de arrer er his ways en make him go ter chu'ch en pra'r-meetin'; but it wa'n't no use. I dunno who killt 'im, en I doan wanter know, fer I 'd be mos' sho' ter fin' out dat my boy had sta'ted de fuss. Ef I 'd 'a' had a son lack you, Brer Dan, I 'd 'a' be'n a proud nigger; oh, yas, I would, sho's you bawn. But you ain' lookin' ez well ez you oughter, Brer Dan. Dey's sump'n de matter wid you, en w'at 's mo', I 'spec' you dunno w'at it is.'

"Now, dis yer kin' er talk nach'ly th'owed Dan off'n his gya'd, en fus' thing he knowed he wuz talkin' ter dis ole cunjuh man des lack he wuz one er his bes' frien's. He tol' 'im all 'bout not feelin' well in de mawnin', en ax' 'im ef he could tell w'at wuz de matter wid 'im.

"'Yas,' sez de cunjuh man. 'Dey is a witch be'n ridin' you right 'long. I kin see de marks er de bridle on yo' mouf. En I'll des bet yo' back is raw whar she 's be'n beatin' you.'

"'Yas,' 'spon' Dan, 'so it is.' He had n' notice it befo', but now he felt des lack de hide had be'n tuk off'n 'im.

"'En yo' thighs is des raw whar de spurrers has be'n driv' in you,' sez de cunjuh man. 'You can't see de raw spots, but you kin feel 'em.'

"'Oh, yas,' 'lows Dan, 'dey does hu't pow'ful bad.'

"'En w'at's mo',' sez de cunjuh man, comin' up close ter Dan en whusp'in' in his yeah, 'I knows who it is be'n ridin' you.'

"'Who is it?' ax' Dan. 'Tell me who it is.'

"'It's a' ole nigger 'oman down by Rockfish Crick. She had a pet rabbit, en you cotch' 'im one day, en she's been squarin' up wid you eber sence. But you better stop her, er e'se you'll be rid ter def in a mont' er so.'

"'No,' sez Dan, 'she can't kill me, sho'.'

"'I dunno how dat is,' said de cunjuh man, 'but she kin make yo' life mighty mis'able. Ef I wuz in yo' place, I 'd stop her right off.'

"'But how is I gwine ter stop her?' ax' Dan. 'I dunno nuffin 'bout stoppin' witches.'

"'Look a heah, Dan,' sez de yuther; 'you is a goad young man. I lacks you monst'us well. Fac', I feels lack some er dese days I mought buy you fum yo' marster, ef I could eber make money ernuff at my bizness dese hard times, en 'dop' you fer my son. I lacks you so well dat I'm gwine ter he'p you git rid er dis yer witch fer good en all; fer des ez long ez she libs, you is sho' ter hab trouble, en trouble, en mo' trouble.'

"You is de bes' frien' I got, Unk' Jube,' sez Dan, 'en I'll 'member yo' kin'ness ter my dyin' day. Tell me how I kin git rid er dis yer ole witch w'at 's be'n ridin' me so ha'd.'

"In de fus' place,' sez de cunjuh man, 'dis ole witch nebber comes in her own shape, but eve'y night, at ten o'clock, she tu'ns herse'f inter a black cat, en runs down ter yo' cabin en bridles you, en mounts you, en dribes you out th'oo de chimbly, en rides you ober de roughes' places she kin fin'. All you got ter do is ter set fer her in de bushes 'side er yo' cabin, en hit her in de head wid a rock er a lighterd-knot w'en she goes pas'.'

"But,' sez Dan, 'how kin I see her in de da'k? En s'posen I hits at her en misses her? Er s'posen I des woun's her, en she gits erway, — w'at she gwine do ter me den?'

"I is done studied 'bout all dem things,' sez de cunjuh man, 'en it 'pears ter me de bes' plan fer you ter foller is ter lemme tu'n you ter some creetur w'at kin see in de da'k, en w'at kin run des ez fas' ez a cat, en w'at kin bite, en bite fer ter kill; en den you won't hafter hab no trouble atter de job is done. I dunno whuther you 'd lack dat er no, but dat is de sho'es' way.'

"I doan keer,' 'spon' Dan. 'I'd des ez lief be anything fer a' hour er so, ef I kin kill dat ole witch. You kin do des w'at you er mineter.'

"All right, den,' sez de cunjuh man, 'you come down ter my cabin at half-past nine o'clock ter-night, en I'll fix you up.'

"Now, dis cunjuh man, w'en he had got th'oo talkin' wid Dan, kep' on down de road 'long de side er de plantation, 'tel he met Mahaly comin' home fum wuk des atter sundown.

"Hoddy do, ma'm,' sezee; 'is yo' name Sis' Mahaly, w'at b'longs ter Mars Dugal' McAdoo?'

"Yas,' 'spon' Mahaly, 'dat's my name, en I b'longs ter Mars Dugal'.'

"Well,' sezee, 'yo' husban' Dan wuz down by my cabin dis ebenin', en he got bit by a spider er sump'n, en his foot is swoll' up so he can't walk. En he ax' me fer ter fin' you en fetch you down dere ter he'p 'im home.'

"Co'se Mahaly wanten see w'at had happen' ter Dan, en so she sta'ted down de road wid de cunjuh man. Ez soon ez he got her inter his cabin, he shet de do', en sprinkle' some goopher mixtry on her, en tu'nt her ter a black cat. Den he tuk 'n put her in a bairl, en put a bo'd on de bairl, en a rock on de bo'd, en lef her dere 'tel he got good en ready fer ter use her.

"Long 'bout half-pas' nine o'clock Dan come down ter de cunjuh man's cabin. It wuz a wa'm night, en de do' wuz stan'in' open. De cunjuh man 'vited Dan ter come in, en pass' de time er day wid 'im. Ez soon ez Dan 'mence' talkin', he heared a cat miauin' en scratchin' en gwine on at a tarrable rate.

"Wat's all dat fuss 'bout?' ax' Dan.

"Oh, dat ain' nuffin but my ole gray tomcat,' sez de cunjuh man. 'I has ter shet 'im up sometimes fer ter keep 'im in nights, en co'se he doan lack it.

"Now,' 'lows de cunjuh man, 'lemme tell you des w'at you is got ter do. Wen you ketches dis witch, you mus' take her right by de th'oat en bite her right th'oo de neck. Be sho' yo' teef goes th'oo at de fus' bite, en den you won't nebber be bothe'd no mo' by dat witch. En w'en you git done, come back heah en I'll tu'n

you ter yo'se'f ag'in, so you kin go home en git yo' night's res'.'

"Den de cunjuh man gun Dan sump'n nice en sweet ter drink out'n a new go'd, en in 'bout a minute Dan foun' hisse'f tu'nt ter a gray wolf; en soon ez he felt all fo' er his noo feet on de groun', he sta'ted off fas' ez he could fer his own cabin, so he could be sho' en be dere time ernuff ter ketch de witch, en put a' een' ter her kyarin's-on.

"Ez soon ez Dan wuz gone good, de cunjuh man tuk de rock off'n de bo'd, en de bo'd off'n de bairl, en out le'p' Mahaly en sta'ted fer ter go home, des lack a cat er a 'oman er anybody e'se would w'at wuz in trouble; en it wa'n't many minutes befo' she wuz gwine up de path ter her own do'.

"Meanw'iles, w'en Dan had retch' de cabin, he had hid hisse'f in a bunch er jimson weeds in de ya'd. He had n' wait' long befo' he seed a black cat run up de path to'ds de do'. Des ez soon ez she got close ter 'im, he le'p' out en ketch' her by de th'oat, en got a grip on her, des lack de cunjuh man had tol' 'im ter do. En lo en behol'! no sooner had de blood 'mence' ter flow dan de black cat tu'nt back ter Mahaly, en Dan seed dat he had killt his own wife. En w'iles her bref wuz gwine she call' out:

"O Dan! O my husban'! come en he'p me! come en sabe me fum dis wolf w'at 's killin' me!"

"Wen po' Dan sta'ted to'ds her, ez any man nach'ly would, it des made her holler wuss en wuss; fer she did n' knowed dis yer wolf wuz her Dan. En Dan des had ter hide in de weeds, en grit his teef en hoi' hisse'f in, 'tel she passed out'n her mis'ry, callin' fer Dan ter de las', en wond'rin' w'y he did n' come en he'p her. En Dan 'lowed ter hisse'f he 'd ruther 'a' be'n killt a dozen times 'n ter 'a' done w'at he had ter Mahaly.

"Dan wuz mighty nigh 'stracted, but w'en Mahaly wuz dead en he got his min' straighten' out a little, it did n' take 'im mo' d'n a minute er so fer ter see th'oo all de cunjuh man's lies, en how de cunjuh man had fooled 'im en made 'im kill Mahaly, fer ter git eben wid 'im fer killin' er his son. He kep' gittin' madder en madder, en Mahaly had n' much mo' d'n drawed her' las bref befo' he sta'ted back ter de cunjuh man's cabin ha'd ez he could run.

"Wen he got dere, de do' wuz stan'in' open; a lighterd-knot wuz flick'rin' on de h'a'th, en de ole cunjuh man wuz settin' dere noddin' in de corner. Dan le'p' in de do' en jump' fer dis man's th'oat, en got de same grip on 'im w'at de cunjuh man had tol' 'im 'bout half a' hour befo'. It wuz ha'd wuk dis time, fer de ole man's neck wuz monst'us tough en stringy, but Dan hilt on long ernuff ter be sho' his job wuz done right. En eben den he did n' hol' on long ernuff; fer w'en he tu'nt de cunjuh man loose en he fell ober on de flo', de cunjuh man rollt his eyes at Dan, en sezee:—

"I's eben wid you, Brer Dan, en you er eben wid me; you killt my son en I killt yo' 'oman. En ez I doan want no mo' d'n w'at 's fair 'bout dis thing, ef you'll retch up wid yo' paw en take down dat go'd hangin' on dat peg ober de chimbly, en take a sip er dat mixtry, it'll tu'n you back ter a nigger ag'in, en I kin die mo' sad'sfied 'n ef I lef you lack you is.'

"Dan nebber 'lowed fer a minute dat a man would lie wid his las' bref, en co'se he seed de sense er gittin' tu'nt back befo' de cunjuh man died; so he dumb on a chair en retch' fer de go'd, en tuk a sip er de mixtry. En ez soon ez he 'd done dat de cunjuh man lafft his las' laf, en gapsed out wid 'is las' gaps:—

"Uh huh! I reckon I's square wid you now fer killin' me, too; fer dat goopher on you is done fix' en sot now fer good, en all de cunj'in' in de worl' won't nebber take it off.

'Wolf you is en wolf you stays, All de rest er yo' bawn days.'

"Co'se Brer Dan could n' do nuffin. He knowed it wa'n't no use, but he dumb up on de chimbly en got

down de go'ds en bottles en yuther cunjuh fixin's, en tried 'em all on hisse'f, but dey didn' do no good. Den he run down ter ole Aun' Peggy, but she did n' know de wolf langwidge, en couldn't 'a' tuk off dis yuther goopher nohow, eben ef she 'd 'a' unnerstood w'at Dan wuz sayin'. So po' Dan wuz bleedgd ter be a wolf all de rest er his bawn days.

"Dey foun' Mahaly down by her own cabin nex' mawnin', en eve'ybody made a great 'miration 'bout how she 'd be'n killt. De niggers 'lowed a wolf had bit her. De w'ite folks say no, dey ain' be'n no wolves 'roun' dere fer ten yeahs er mo'; en dey did n' know w'at ter make out'n it. En w'en dey could n' fin' Dan nowhar, dey 'lowed he'd quo'lled wid Mahaly en killt her, en run erway; en dey did n' know w'at ter make er dat, fer Dan en Mahaly wuz de mos' lovin' couple on de plantation. Dey put de dawgs on Dan's scent, en track 'im down ter ole Unk' Jube's cabin, en foun' de ole man dead, en dey did n' know w'at ter make er dat; en den Dan's scent gun out, en dey didn' know w'at ter make er dat. Mars Dugal' tuk on a heap 'bout losin' two er his bes' han's in one day, en ole missis 'lowed it wuz a jedgment on 'im fer sump'n he 'd done. But dat fall de craps wuz monst'us big, so Mars Dugal' say de Lawd had temper' de win' ter de sho'n ram, en make up ter 'im fer w'at he had los'.

"Dey buried Mahaly down in dat piece er low groun' you er talkin' 'bout cl'arin' up. Ez fer po' Dan, he did n' hab nowhar e'se ter go, so he des stayed 'roun' Mahaly's grabe, w'en he wa'n't out in de yuther woods gittin' sump'n ter eat. En sometimes, w'en night would come, de niggers useter heah him howlin' en howlin' down dere, des fittin' ter break his hea't. En den some mo' un 'em said dey seed Mahaly's ha'nt dere 'bun'ance er times, colloquin' wid dis gray wolf. En eben now, fifty yeahs sence, long atter ole Dan has died en dried up in de woods, his ha'nt en Mahaly's hangs 'roun' dat piece er low groun', en eve'body w'at goes 'bout dere has some bad luck er 'nuther; fer ha'nts doan lack ter be 'sturb' on dey own stompin'-groun'."

The air had darkened while the old man related this harrowing tale. The rising wind whistled around the eaves, slammed the loose window-shutters, and, still increasing, drove the rain in fiercer gusts into the piazza. As Julius finished his story and we rose to seek shelter within doors, the blast caught the angle of some chimney or gable in the rear of the house, and bore to our ears a long, wailing note, an epitome, as it were, of remorse and hopelessness.

"Dat 's des lack po' ole Dan useter howl," observed Julius, as he reached for his umbrella, "en w'at I be'n tellin' you is de reason I doan lack ter see dat neck er woods cl'ared up. Co'se it b'longs ter you, en a man kin do ez he choose' wid 'is own. But ef you gits rheumatiz er fever en agur, er ef you er snake-bit er p'isen' wid some yarb er 'nuther, er ef a tree falls on you, er a ha'nt runs you en makes you git 'stracted in yo' min', lack some folks I knows w'at went foolin' 'roun' dat piece er lan', you can't say I neber wa'ned you, suh, en tol' you w'at you mought look fer en be sho' ter fin'."

When I cleared up the land in question, which was not until the following year, I recalled the story Julius had told us, and looked in vain for a sunken grave or perhaps a few weather-bleached bones of some denizen of the forest. I cannot say, of course, that some one had not been buried there; but if so, the hand of time had long since removed any evidence of the fact. If some lone wolf, the last of his pack, had once made his den there, his bones had long since crumbled into dust and gone to fertilize the rank vegetation that formed the undergrowth of this wild spot. I did find, however, a bee-tree in the woods, with an ample cavity in its trunk, and an opening through which convenient access could be had to the stores of honey within. I have reason to believe that ever since I had bought the place, and for many years before, Julius had been getting honey from this tree. The gray wolf's haunt had doubtless proved useful in keeping off too inquisitive people, who might have interfered with his monopoly.

THURSDAY

from *The Great Small Cat and Others*

by May E. Southworth

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A girl, a hammock, a book and a day in June: a happy combination for memories, idleness and half-sadness, with no end of interesting possibilities that might come to one who loves and responds to the allurements.

It was one of those hot early June days in a California valley when all nature seems held in quiet suspense. The wonderful and unusual stillness brooding over this little sunny spot in the world, at last arrested the girl's attention as she lazily swung in the hammock under a group of giant oaks, and she let her book fall to the ground in unconscious neglect. Suddenly her ear caught a feeble wail borne on the quiet air, a sound that held her breathless, with a little sobbing catch in her throat. It was too indistinct to have attracted attention save for nature's sympathetic hush, and scarcely seemed separated from the throbbing silence all about her; yet, responsive and expectant she held her breath to listen to the secret it might unfold. The faint cry was insistent and at last revealed itself to her unmistakably as the tiny mew of a tiny kitten. When convinced of this she was roused to alertness in an instant for she had a special predilection for baby cats, the smaller the better. The pathetic little cry for help seemed to grow weaker and fainter as she blindly followed the sound, which finally led her to the loft of the stable. Even then, although she realized that she was "warm on the scent," she could not locate the exact spot this weak little mew came from. But presently she felt sure that it must come from the depths of a huge packing case, half-filled with books, which was stored in a far corner. The box being almost her own height, she could by no possibility lean over sufficiently for her eyes to pierce its dusky depths. Hastily getting a bench for a perch and a lighted candle to set at a knot hole half-way down the side of the box, she discovered its dark secret to be a small bit of coal black glossy fur, without much form or shape, lying flat as a pancake on one of the cold hard books; the tiniest mite of a live cat she had ever seen.

As she lifted the little limp, cold bunch to her warm hand, it ceased to mew and, she thought, to breathe, but she carried it to the house and found it alive and able to take a little warm milk from a spoon. With repeated doses of this nourishment at regular intervals the baby began to revive and at bedtime was quite a normal kitten, except that its frame was so unusually small and meager.

Thinking that the mother-cat would surely return at night to the place where she had left her one wee infant, the girl returned this "special edition" to the books in the packing case, making it as warm and comfy as possible. In the morning her first waking thoughts

flew to her tiny protégée and on going to the box she found the poor little thing just as she had left it the night before--no mother, and evidently abandoned. This time, on carrying it to the house she made it a permanent abiding place and continued to feed it with a spoon, as it seemed to grasp with readiness the idea of getting its food in this fashion and after a few lessons, took very kindly to it.

The mystery of how this little orphan came to be in the case of books, alone and deserted, was never satisfactorily solved, although on inquiry the girl was told that a neighbor had found a black mother-cat dead in her laundry about the time of the discovery of the little kitten. It was thought that this must have been the mother of the little waif and that she had doubtless met with an untimely death.

At any rate, no mother ever appeared to claim the baby, so she was adopted and given the name of Thursday, that being the day of her advent. She was so wee that until she was able to help herself to a grown-up cat's food, she was always fed from a spoon, and soon grew to look upon this useful article as the source of all motherly comfort, and to take milk from it as the chief object in living. In all her after life, the sight of a spoon seemed to give her a thrill and it was always very funny to watch her keenness in discovering anyone at the table using this, her foster-mother, which she, very naturally, regarded as her own special property. This ridiculously small defender of her propriety rights would make her resentment of this trespass on her claim manifest in various cunning ways. Often she would watch with impatient, glaring eyes, from her vantage ground, the floor, each and every spoonful, as it passed from plate to mouth, hoping in time to stare this particular offender out of countenance. But if her jealous, concentrated round eyes failed to attract the desired attention, when longer forbearance became impossible, she would jump to the lap of the transgressor, thrusting her little pink nose into the hand that had so basely ignored her indignation, and intercept the spoon with a dainty paw and a comical air of haughty rebuke, as if saying: "Little Thursday's! Have you forgotten?"

This impertinence, which the affront had been designedly coaxing forth, never failed to bring her a very substantial reward, and certainly no reproof. And so the baby was spoiled and encouraged in her wilful little ways which were considered the "cutest ever." There was never a time in all her life when she would not willingly leave affairs ordinarily attractive to cats, to come and sit serenely on some lap, with a bib about her neck, a sweet smile of peace on her face, to be fed with a spoon. She never reached the full stature of an ordinary cat, but grew into a wondrously beautiful little beastie and developed the most independent, self-contained, evasive personality imaginable, for a cat. Looking no more than half-grown she was the very perfection of dainty symmetry, her coat a solid glossy black, almost blue in its depths. She was remarkably quick in her graceful motions, even for a cat, and had the dearest little round blue eyes, just scintillating with mischief and flaming with an inordinate love of fun which radiated to the tip of her inquisitive little nose and from there to the

quivering end of her wicked, ecstatic tail. She also possessed such queer twists in a highly strung and very nervous temperament, that her erratic moods were variable and often startling surprises. But she was always singularly human and steadfast in one feminine quality and that was in liking to do just as she pleased. One of her "queer twists" was, at various intervals, to have sudden spasms of hilarious gaiety and to give vent to these frantic spells in play that were the times of her life. She never had any company in these grand romps, but was strangely independent and wildly happy, the imp of play which had possession, seeming to have endless sources of its own in the way of society and amusement. She would race "sideways" through the house, her "baby blue eyes" black as coal, turn double "upside downs," and play a kind of hide-and-seek all by herself, plainly just play for play's sake until her frolic, which sometimes rose to a frenzy, had exhausted her crazy mood.

Among our precious lares and penates, was a magnificent Irish setter, a handsome fellow with a coat of wavy golden red hair and eyes of such beseeching softness that he won all mankind. Until the advent of Thursday he had been sole proprietor and sovereign owner of the sunny back porch and playground, not to mention the hearts he ruled. But with the coming of the little black lady all his previous rights were changed, she, with nonchalant impudence, taking cool and unchallenged possession of all, including the king himself, who seemed one of her most willing subjects. She quickly learned and presumed on her power over him but with heroic patience this handsome fellow yielded glad obedience and was ever ready to bend before her small feminine coquetry, his gallantry seeming boundless. Like a knight of old, he was always rushing to her rescue and ever espousing her cause, using his strength generously at all times in her behalf. If she happened to cry within her privileged precincts of the house, screened from his entrance, if he was anywhere on the grounds within sound of her call, he would instantly come to her succor, peering through the screen with such an anxious, troubled expression in his dear goldy-brown eyes, his head turned first on one side and then on the other, a way setters have when trying to fathom mysteries. Having satisfied himself that she was in no serious trouble or in need of his gallant protectorship, he would lift his appealing brown eyes to us with an air of unutterable reproach for his unnecessary disturbance, and drop to the floor with a huge sigh, perhaps to try again for a few quiet winks. Life with him was no longer dull or lacking in color after Thursday became a member of our household, but was full of rich and varied interests for every waking hour, which were many more than formerly, as it was only under the greatest difficulties that he could get even half of his accustomed hours of greedy sleep through the interrupted days. Of old, his choice of pleasant places of repose had been the shady back porch, where he would stretch himself at full length, his velvety ears lying broad and flat, and he still indulged himself in this chosen spot, although under difficulties. For Thursday had soon learned that to snuggle close to his curly coat meant warmth and comfort, but not for the dog, for it teased and worried his naps dreadfully to have her cuddle so close. However as he seemed loathe to surrender this adopted

spot, his by "right of domain," he was most gentlemanly and patient, never even saying "bow." When sleepy time came the kitten would boldly hunt his resting place and nestle under the softness of his downy ear for her siesta. Feigning sleep, his nose between his paws and one eye half-open, the dog would bide the time when she was fast asleep and then, most cautiously and carefully, draw himself away in order to have his ear to himself. Little Lonesome, feeling the want of her comfortable covering, would sleepily creep under his ear again and the setter would again, with touching resignation, watch his chance and get away. This exchange of courtesies would go on until the dog evidently realized that he might as well give up and let the little wilful torment have her way. Or there might be times when he would get his lazy self up and off, but even this manoeuvre might be only temporary relief, if the kitten still longed for his companionship. Never once was the dog known to growl or fail in politeness, even when the kitten trespassed on his hospitality to the extent of selecting such dainty bits from his dinner plate as pleased her fancy. At such times he would stand by, big and stern, wistfully watching the choice pieces disappear, and patiently wait until she had finished her selection and was seated on her haunches near by, washing her little black face, before he would presume to take that which, in her gracious indulgence, she had left for him. In this elaborate ceremony of her toilet, she would sometimes pause, and with a kind of pensive wondering, gaze at her now greedy host. In this attitude, with one tiny paw raised meditatively, and her mouth half-open showing a bit of pink tongue between her gleaming teeth, she looked as if actually smiling in supreme affability on an attendant chamberlain. At all times, the attitude of affected condescension assumed by this mite of a kitten toward her big gentlemanly comrade, was so absurd as to be very funny.

And so the summer and fall months passed and the dog and kitten grew in friendship and intimacy and were an endless source of interest to the family. Unfortunately for these pets, the country home was soon to be broken up and closed for the winter. Thursday's devoted friend and protector, the setter, was sent to the hunting lodge, and a home was provided for the kitten with a friend who lived only a couple of miles away.

The girl cherished this little darling kitten which she had rescued, devotedly, and was very sad at the necessary parting, but never dreamed for a moment but that she would be the only one to experience any regret. She thought, of course, that the heart of her apparently frivolous little pet would readily accept the new conditions without a homesick thought, as it meant the same kindness, food and shelter to which she had been accustomed, and to leave her alone at the country house was out of the question, as it would be to risk letting her perish with cold and hunger. So the kitten was carried to the home of the friend and left, with a big heartache but, as the girl thought, only on her part.

The next day through the telephone came the report that Lady Thursday did not take at all kindly to her change of residence, but expressed

a decided dissatisfaction with the new order of things, scorning all food with a painfully injured air, staring straight ahead in black misery, ignoring everybody and all overtures in the way of coaxing, petting and comforting. Every means possible was tried to make her feel settled and as happy as a kitten ought to be in such a good home, but all in vain. Late in the afternoon this bonnie wee bit of homesickness appeared at our door, looking so pathetically small and weary, but still determined, that it made the tears come just to look at her. She was as quiet and demure as an injured saint but there was an anxious wistfulness in her big pleading eyes that went straight to one's heart. She evidently realized that she had transgressed the law in eluding the vigilance of her keepers, and in running away, and her trembling little heart was thumping a wild tattoo. But her mental and physical rapture at being in her own home once more was glowing in triumphant satisfaction in every movement. And that she had been shrewd enough to find her way back all by herself in a road where there were no sign-posts a cat might read, but only scent for guide was also obviously a source of great self-congratulation to her. This demonstration of preference on the kitten's part for her home, and for her, was a surprise to the girl and touched her heart, for she had not thought her saucy, independent little favorite capable of such deep appreciation. It was so evident that this obstinate little pet objected to this change of abode that it was with the greatest reluctance that the girl felt forced to send her back again. There surely could be no mistaking the small queen's sentiments in the matter, for her manner was so haughty and reproachful. It might be a lovely joke her perfidious family were playing on her, but they had made a sad mistake, if they were serious, to think for one moment she would condone such treachery or that she would tolerate the other house as home, even for one day. She bestowed a royal "not-to-do-it-again" sort of threat on all, but in spite of her scathing remonstrance, she was told of the absolute need she had of another shelter, consoled and again carried to the distant home, rather than be allowed her stubborn way and left at the deserted country place to take her chances against starvation and neglect.

This time the little black visitor was shown special attention by the rather indignant friends of the girl, and more carefully guarded. If she showed a tendency to wander, she was made a prisoner in the hope that she would soon forget her former home and accept the inevitable, which from their point of view, was certainly very nice. Although the kitten was unnaturally patient and seemed to look upon their soothing efforts with a desire to be soothed, time showed that she remained, through all, unmoved in purpose, proving that in her apparently indifferent and trivial nature there were depths that had not been suspected.

The great master passion of home-love and, for a small cat, a tremendous wilfulness were developing in her sturdy little body. She would not be reconciled to this new home but was slyly on the alert, constantly devising all sorts of shrewd ways in which she might cheat her keepers and gain her end.

One day toward evening, their vigilance being somewhat relaxed, owing to her seeming submission, she managed to escape. She had been very crafty in her "seeming submission" as it had evidently been only a subterfuge, for she showed she had not been vanquished by any manner of means, or even discouraged by the delay. All the time she had seemed so sad and passive she must have been only biding her time and opportunity, scheming all the while desperately in feminine ingenuity to outwit her jailors. When finally she was rewarded, and the instant she was free, she went scampering down the path, through the timberland, taking by instinct the "short cut" which was the nearest and straightest way to the one place on earth to her, each bounding step keeping time to the homesick beat of her heart.

Oh, poor, plucky, obstinate morsel of a kitten! If there had only been some kindly hand to have turned you back; turned you back from that demon, hungry and savage, lying in wait for you in the narrow path through which you were sure to pass! Oh, that there had been some Spirit of Pity that cherishes the kittens, to have had a saving compassion on you!

But on sped the flying feet, with eyes blind to all but the one big home-impulse that was giving her the courage of ten. All grief, disappointment and heartaches forgotten as the old friendly place grew nearer and nearer. Down through the valley and up the fatal hill, racing as fast as she could go on the ragged path, clearing brambles and ditches and fallen tree-trunks with flying leaps, turning neither to the right nor the left, going straight for home. Panting and throbbing she finally reached a tiny roadway among the briars and undergrowth, a narrow trail seldom used except by small fur and those in a hurry, like Thursday. Faster and faster she went exultingly on through this shadowy thicket to the next descent, and deeper and deeper into the depth and mystery of the woods, where loomed a silent murderer, set in rabbit land for the unwary, which had marked this little pitiful victim to clutch in its fatal curve.

Have courage, little Thursday, and turn back. Oh, in mercy turn back and save yourself from the horrible fate of this half-concealed shadow so near to you now! Or, halt an instant and go round this deadly trap. Home is so near, only a little way now. Home! Home! almost in sight, in answer to the burning desire in your heart. A sudden stop! The twinkling of a black shape twirling in the air, and the path is empty!

The deadly grip of the cruel wire has borne Thursday home in a flash.

THE HOUSE OF GOLDEN JOSS

from *Tales of Chinatown*

by Sax Rohmer

PG EBook #5697

I

THE BLOOD-STAINED IDOL

"Stop when we pass the next lamp and give me a light for my pipe."

"Why?"

"No! don't look round," warned my companion. "I think someone is following us. And it is always advisable to be on guard in this neighbourhood."

We had nearly reached the house in Wade Street, Limehouse, which my friend used as a base for East End operations. The night was dark but clear, and I thought that presently when dawn came it would bring a cold, bright morning. There was no moon, and as we passed the lamp and paused we stood in almost total darkness.

Facing in the direction of the Council School I struck a match. It revealed my ruffianly looking companion--in whom his nearest friends must have failed to recognize Mr. Paul Harley of Chancery Lane.

He was glancing furtively back along the street, and when a moment later we moved on, I too, had detected the presence of a figure stumbling toward us.

"Don't stop at the door," whispered Harley, for our follower was only a few yards away.

Accordingly we passed the house in which Harley had rooms, and had proceeded some fifteen paces farther when the man who was following us stumbled in between Harley and myself, clutching an arm of either. I scarcely knew what to expect, but was prepared for anything, when:

"Mates!" said a man huskily. "Mates, if you know where I can get a drink, take me there!"

Harley laughed shortly. I cannot say if he remained suspicious of the newcomer, but for my own part I had determined after one glance at the man that he was merely a drunken fireman newly recovered from a prolonged debauch.

"Where 'ave yer been, old son?" growled Harley, in that wonderful dialect of his which I had so often and so vainly sought to cultivate. "You look as though you'd 'ad one too many already."

"I ain't," declared the fireman, who appeared to be in a semi-dazed condition. "I ain't 'ad one since ten o'clock last night. It's dope wot's got me, not rum."

"Dope!" said Harley sharply; "been 'avin' a pipe, eh?"

"If you've got a corpse-reviver anywhere," continued the man in that curious, husky voice, "'ave pity on me, mate. I seen a thing to-night wot give me the jim-jams."

"All right, old son," said my friend good-humouredly; "about turn! I've got a drop in the bottle, but me an' my mate sails to-morrow, an' it's the last."

"Gawd bless yer!" growled the fireman; and the three of us--an odd trio, truly--turned about, retracing our steps.

As we approached the street lamp and its light shone upon the haggard face of the man walking between us, Harley stopped, and:

"Wot's up with yer eye?" he inquired.

He suddenly tilted the man's head upward and peered closely into one of his eyes. I suppressed a gasp of surprise for I instantly recognized the fireman of the Jupiter!

"Nothin' up with it, is there?" said the fireman.

"Only a lump o' mud," growled Harley, and with a very dirty handkerchief he pretended to remove the imaginary stain, and then, turning to me:

"Open the door, Jim," he directed.

His examination of the man's eyes had evidently satisfied him that our acquaintance had really been smoking opium.

We paused immediately outside the house for which we had been bound, and as I had the key I opened the door and the three of us stepped into a little dark room. Harley closed the door and we stumbled upstairs to a low first-floor apartment facing the street. There was nothing in its appointments, as revealed in the light of an oil lamp burning on the solitary table, to distinguish it from a thousand other such apartments which may be leased for a few shillings a week in the neighbourhood. That adjoining might have told a different story, for it more closely resembled an actor's dressing-room than a seaman's lodging; but the door of this sanctum was kept scrupulously locked.

"Sit down, old son," said my friend heartily, pushing forward an old

arm-chair. "Fetch out the grog, Jim; there's about enough for three."

I walked to a cupboard, as the fireman sank limply down in the chair, and took out a bottle and three glasses. When the man, who, as I could now see quite plainly, was suffering from the after effects of opium, had eagerly gulped the stiff drink which I handed to him, he looked around with dim, glazed eyes, and:

"You've saved my life, mates," he declared. "I've 'ad a 'orrible nightmare, I 'ave--a nightmare. See?"

He fixed his eyes on me for a moment, then raised himself from his seat, peering narrowly at me across the table.

"I seed you before, mate. Gaw, blimey! if you ain't the bloke wot I giv'd the pigtail to! And wot laid out that blasted Chink as was scraggin' me! Shake, mate!"

I shook hands with him, Harley eyeing me closely the while, in a manner which told me that his quick brain had already supplied the link connecting our doped acquaintance with my strange experience during his absence. At the same time it occurred to me that my fireman friend did not know that Ah Fu was dead, or he would never have broached the subject so openly.

"That's so," I said, and wondered if he required further information.

"It's all right, mate. I don't want to 'ear no more about blinking pigtails--not all my life I don't," and he sat back heavily in his chair and stared at Harley.

"Where have you been?" inquired Harley, as if no interruption had occurred, and then began to reload his pipe: "at Malay Jack's or at Number Fourteen?"

"Neither of 'em!" cried the fireman, some evidence of animation appearing in his face; "I been at Kwen Lung's."

"In Pennyfields?"

"That's 'im, the old bloke with the big joss. I allers goes to see Ma Lorenzo when I'm in Port o' London. I've seen 'er for the last time, mates."

He banged a big and dirty hand upon the table.

"Last night I see murder done, an' only that I know they wouldn't believe me, I'd walk across to Limehouse P'lice Station presently and put the splits on 'em, I would."

Harley, who was seated behind the speaker, glanced at me significantly.

"Sure you wasn't dreamin'?" he inquired facetiously.

"Dreamin'!" cried the man. "Dreams don't leave no blood be'ind, do they?"

"Blood!" I exclaimed.

"That's wot I said--blood! When I woke up this mornin' there was blood all on that grinnin' joss--the blood wot 'ad dripped from 'er shoulders when she fell."

"Eh!" said Harley. "Blood on whose shoulders? Wot the 'ell are you talkin' about, old son?"

"Ere"--the fireman turned in his chair and grasped Harley by the arm--"listen to me, and I'll tell you somethink, I will. I'm goin' in the Seahawk in the mornin' see? But if you want to know somethink, I'll tell yer. Drunk or sober I bars the blasted p'lice, but if you like to tell 'em I'll put you on somethink worth tellin'. Sure the bottle's empty, mates?"

I caught Harley's glance and divided the remainder of the whisky evenly between the three glasses.

"Good 'ealth," said the fireman, and disposed of his share at a draught. "That's bucked me up wonderful."

He lay back in his chair and from a little tobacco-box began to fill a short clay pipe.

"Look 'ere, mates, I'm soberin' up, like, after the smoke, an' I can see, I can see plain, as nobody'll ever believe me. Nobody ever does, worse luck, but 'ere goes. Pass the matches."

He lighted his pipe, and looking about him in a sort of vaguely aggressive way:

"Last night," he resumed, "after I was chucked out of the Dock Gates, I made up my mind to go and smoke a pipe with old Ma Lorenzo. Round I goes to Pennyfields, and she don't seem glad to see me. There's nobody there only me. Not like the old days when you 'ad to book your seat in advance."

He laughed gruffly.

"She didn't want to let me in at first, said they was watched, that if a Chink 'ad an old pipe wot 'ad b'longed to 'is grandfather it was good enough to get 'im fined fifty quid. Anyway, me bein' an old friend she spread a mat for me and filled me a pipe. I asked after old Kwen Lung, but, of course, 'e was out gamblin', as usual; so after old Ma Lorenzo 'ad made me comfortable an' gone out I 'ad the place to myself, and presently I dozed off and forgot all about bloody ship's bunkers an'

nigger-drivin' Scotchmen."

He paused and looked about him defiantly.

"I dunno 'ow long I slept," he continued, "but some time in the night I kind of 'alf woke up."

At that he twisted violently in his chair and glared across at Harley:

"You been a pal to me," he said; "but tell me I was dreamin' again and I'll smash yer bloody face!"

He glared for a while, then addressing his narrative more particularly to me, he resumed:

"It was a scream wot woke me--a woman's scream. I didn't sit up; I couldn't. I never felt like it before. It was the same as bein' buried alive, I should think. I could see an' I could 'ear, but I couldn't move one muscle in my body. Foller me? An' wot did I see, mates, an' wot did I 'ear? I'm goin' to tell yer. I see old Kwen Lung's daughter-----"

"I didn't know 'e 'ad one," murmured Harley.

"Then you don't know much!" shouted the fireman. "I knew years ago, but 'e kept 'er stowed away somewhere up above, an' last night was the first time I ever see 'er. It was 'er shriek wot 'ad reached me, reached me through the smoke. I don't take much stock in Chink gals in general, but this one's mother was no Chink, I'll swear. She was just as pretty as a bloomin' ivory doll, an' as little an' as white, and that old swine Kwen Lung 'ad tore the dress off of 'er shoulders with a bloody great whip!"

Harley was leaning forward in his seat now, intent upon the man's story, and although I could not get rid of the idea that our friend was relating the events of a particularly unpleasant opium dream, nevertheless I was fascinated by the strange story and by the strange manner of its telling.

"I saw the blood drip from 'er bare shoulders, mates," the man continued huskily, and with his big dirty hands he strove to illustrate his words. "An' that old yellow devil lashed an' lashed until the poor gal was past screamin'. She just sunk down on the floor all of a 'cap, moanin' and moanin'--Gawd! I can 'ear 'er moanin' now!"

"Meanwhile, 'ere's me with murder in me 'eart lyin' there watchin', an' I can't speak, no! I can't even curse the yellow rat, an' I can't move--not a 'and, not a foot! Just as she fell there right up against the joss an' 'er blood trickled down on 'is gilded feet, old Ma Lorenzo comes staggerin' in. I remember all this as clear as print, mates, remember it plain, but wot 'appened next ain't so good an' clear. Somethink seemed to bust in me 'ead. Only just before I went off, the winder--there's only one in the room--was smashed to smithereens an' somebody come in through it."

"Are you sure?" said Harley eagerly. "Are you sure?"

That he was intensely absorbed in the story he revealed by a piece of bad artistry, very rare in him. He temporarily forgot his dialect. Our marine friend, however, was too much taken up with his own story to notice the slip, and:

"Dead sure!" he shouted.

He suddenly twisted around in his chair.

"Tell me I was dreamin', mate," he invited, "and if you ain't dreamin' in 'arf a tick it won't be because I 'aven't put yer to sleep!"

"I ain't arguin', old son," said Harley soothingly. "Get on with your yarn."

"Ho!" said the fireman, mollified, "so long as you ain't. Well, then, it's all blotted out after that. Somebody come in at the winder, but 'oo it was or wot it was I can't tell yer, not for fifty quid. When I woke up, which is about 'arf an hour before you see me, I'm all alone--see? There's no sign of Kwen Lung nor the gal nor old Ma Lorenzo nor anybody. I sez to meself, wot you keep on sayin'. I sez, 'You're dreamin', Bill.'"

"But I don't think you was," declared Harley. "Straight I don't."

"I know I wasn't!" roared the fireman, and banged the table lustily. "I see 'er blood on the joss an' on the floor where she lay!"

"This morning?" I interjected.

"This mornin', in the light of the little oil lamp where old Ma Lorenzo 'ad roasted the pills! It's all still an' quiet an' I feel more dead than alive. I'm goin' to give 'er a hail, see? When I sez to myself, 'Bill,' I sez, 'put out to sea; you're amongst Kaffirs, Bill.' It occurred to me as old Kwen Lung might wonder 'ow much I knew. So I beat it. But when I got in the open air I felt I'd never make my lodgin's without a tonic. That's 'ow I come to meet you, mates.

"Listen--I'm away in the old Seahawk in the mornin', but I'll tell you somethink. That yellow bastard killed his daughter last night! Beat 'er to death. I see it plain. The sweetest, prettiest bit of ivory as Gawd ever put breath into. If 'er body ain't in the river, it's in the 'ouse. Drunk or sober, I never could stand the splits, but mates"--he stood up, and grasping me by the arm, he drew me across the room where he also seized Harley in his muscular grip--"mates," he went on earnestly, "she was the sweetest, prettiest little gal as a man ever clapped eyes on. One of yer walk into Limehouse Station an' put the koppers wise. I'd sleep easier at sea if I knew old Kwen Lung 'ad gone west on a bloody rope's end."

II

AT KWEN LUNG'S

For fully ten minutes after the fireman had departed Paul Harley sat staring abstractedly in front of him, his cold pipe between his teeth, and knowing his moods I intruded no words upon this reverie, until:

"Come on, Knox," he said, standing up suddenly, "I think this matter calls for speedy action."

"What! Do you think the man's story was true?"

"I think nothing. I am going to look at Kwen Lung's joss."

Without another word he led the way downstairs and out into the deserted street. The first gray halftones of dawn were creeping into the sky, so that the outlines of Limehouse loomed like dim silhouettes about us. There was abundant evidence in the form of noises, strange and discordant, that many workers were busy on dock and riverside, but the streets through which our course lay were almost empty. Sometimes a furtive shadow would move out of some black gully and fade into a dimly seen doorway in a manner peculiarly unpleasant and Asiatic. But we met no palpable pedestrian throughout the journey.

Before the door of a house in Pennyfields which closely resembled that which we had left in Wade Street, in that it was flatly uninteresting, dirty and commonplace, we paused. There was no sign of life about the place and no lights showed at any of the windows, which appeared as dim cavities--eyeless sockets in the gray face of the building, as dawn proclaimed the birth of a new day.

Harley seized the knocker and knocked sharply. There was no response, and he repeated the summons, but again without effect. Thereupon, with a muttered exclamation, he grasped the knocker a third time and executed a veritable tattoo upon the door. When this had proceeded for about half a minute or more:

"All right, all right!" came a shaky voice from within. "I'm coming."

Harley released the knocker, and, turning to me:

"Ma Lorenzo," he whispered. "Don't make any mistakes."

Indeed, even as he warned me, heralded by a creaking of bolts and the rattling of a chain, the door was opened by a fat, shapeless, half-caste

woman of indefinite age; in whose dark eyes, now sunken in bloated cheeks, in whose full though drooping lips, and even in the whole overlaid contour of whose face and figure it was possible to recognize the traces of former beauty. This was Ma Lorenzo, who for many years had lived at that address with old Kwen Lung, of whom strange stories were told in Chinatown.

As Bill Jones, A.B., my friend, Paul Harley, was well known to Ma Lorenzo as he was well known to many others in that strange colony which clusters round the London docks. I sometimes enjoyed the privilege of accompanying my friend on a tour of investigation through the weird resorts which abound in that neighbourhood, and, indeed, we had been returning from one of these Baghdad nights when our present adventure had been thrust upon us. Assuming a wild and boisterous manner which he had at command:

"Urry up, Ma!" said Harley, entering without ceremony; "I want to introduce my pal Jim 'ere to old Kwen Lung, and make it all right for him before I sail."

Ma Lorenzo, who was half Portuguese, replied in her peculiar accent:

"This no time to come waking me up out of bed!"

But Harley, brushing past her, was already inside the stuffy little room, and I hastened to follow.

"Kwen Lung!" shouted my friend loudly. "Where are you? Brought a friend to see you."

"Kwen Lung no hab," came the complaining tones of Ma Lorenzo from behind us.

It was curious to note how long association with the Chinese had resulted in her catching the infection of that pidgin-English which is a sort of esperanto in all Asiatic quarters.

"Eh!" cried my friend, pushing open a door on the right of the passage and stumbling down three worn steps into a very evil-smelling room. "Where is he?"

"Go play fan-tan. Not come back."

Ma Lorenzo, having relocked the street door, had rejoined us, and as I followed my friend down into the dim and uninviting apartment she stood at the top of the steps, hands on hips, regarding us.

The place, which was quite palpably an opium den, must have disappointed anyone familiar with the more ornate houses of Chinese vice in San Francisco and elsewhere. The bare floor was not particularly clean, and the few decorations which the room boasted were garishly European for the most part. A deep divan, evidently used sometimes as a bed, occupied

one side of the room, and just to the left of the steps reposed the only typically Oriental object in the place.

It was a strange thing to see in so sordid a setting; a great gilded joss, more than life-size, squatting, hideous, upon a massive pedestal; a figure fit for some native temple but strangely out of place in that dirty little Limehouse abode.

I had never before visited Kwen Lung's, but the fame of his golden joss had reached me, and I know that he had received many offers for it, all of which he had rejected. It was whispered that Kwen Lung was rich, that he was a great man among the Chinese, and even that some kind of religious ceremony periodically took place in his house. Now, as I stood staring at the famous idol, I saw something which made me stare harder than ever.

The place was lighted by a hanging lamp from which depended bits of coloured paper and several gilded silk tassels; but dim as the light was it could not conceal those tell-tale stains.

There was blood on the feet of the golden idol!

All this I detected at a glance, but ere I had time to speak:

"You can't tell me that tale, Ma!" cried Harley. "I believe 'e was smokin' in 'ere when we knocked."

The woman shrugged her fat shoulders.

"No, hab," she repeated. "You two johnnies clear out. Let me sleep."

But as I turned to her, beneath the nonchalant manner I could detect a great uneasiness; and in her dark eyes there was fear. That Harley also had seen the bloodstains I was well aware, and I did not doubt that furthermore he had noted the fact that the only mat which the room boasted had been placed before the joss--doubtless to hide other stains upon the boards.

As we stood so I presently became aware of a current of air passing across the room in the direction of the open door. It came from a window before which a tawdry red curtain had been draped. Either the window behind the curtain was wide open, which is alien to Chinese habits, or it was shattered. While I was wondering if Harley intended to investigate further:

"Come on, Jim!" he cried boisterously, and clapped me on the shoulder; "the old fox don't want to be disturbed."

He turned to the woman:

"Tell him when he wakes up, Ma," he said, "that if ever my pal Jim wants a pipe he's to 'ave one. Savvy? Jim's square."

"Savvy," replied the woman, and she was wholly unable to conceal her relief. "You clear out now, and I tell Kwen Lung when he come in."

"Righto, Ma!" said Harley. "Kiss 'im on both cheeks for me, an' tell 'im I'll be 'ome again in a month."

Grasping me by the arm he lurched up the steps, and the two of us presently found ourselves out in the street again. In the growing light the squalor of the district was more evident than ever, but the comparative freshness of the air was welcome after the reek of that room in which the golden idol sat leering, with blood at his feet.

"You saw, Harley?" I exclaimed excitedly. "You saw the stains? And I'm certain the window was broken!"

Harley nodded shortly.

"Back to Wade Street!" he said. "I allow myself fifteen minutes to shed Bill Jones, able seaman, and to become Paul Harley, of Chancery Lane."

As we hurried along:

"What steps shall you take?" I asked.

"First step: search Kwen Lung's house from cellar to roof. Second step: entirely dependent upon result of first. The Chinese are subtle, Knox. If Kwen Lung has killed his daughter, it may require all the resources of Scotland Yard to prove it."

"But-----"

"There is no 'but' about it. Chinatown is the one district of London which possesses the property of swallowing people up."

III

"CAPTAIN DAN"

Half an hour later, as I sat in the inner room before the great dressing-table laboriously removing my disguise--for I was utterly incapable of metamorphosing myself like Harley in seven minutes--I heard a rapping at the outer door. I glanced nervously at my face in the mirror.

Comparatively little of "Jim" had yet been removed, for since time was precious to my friend I had acted as his dresser before setting to work

to remove my own make-up. There were two entrances to the establishment, by one of which Paul Harley invariably entered and invariably went out, and from the other of which "Bill Jones" was sometimes seen to emerge, but never Paul Harley. That my friend had made good his retirement I knew, but, nevertheless, if I had to open the door of the outer room it must be as "Jim."

Thinking it impolite not to do so, since the one who knocked might be aware that we had come in but not gone out again, I hastily readjusted that side of my moustache which I had begun to remove, replaced my cap and muffler, and carefully locking the door of the dressing-room, crossed the outer apartment and opened the door.

It was Harley's custom never to enter or leave these rooms except under the mantle of friendly night, but at so early an hour I confess I had not expected a visitor. Wondering whom I should find there I opened the door.

Standing on the landing was a fellow-lodger who permanently occupied the two top rooms of the house. Paul Harley had taken the trouble to investigate the man's past, for "Captain Dan," the name by which he was known in the saloons and worse resorts which he frequented, was palpably a broken-down gentleman; a piece of flotsam caught in the yellow stream. Opium had been his downfall. How he lived I never knew, but Harley believed he had some small but settled income, sufficient to enable him to kill himself in comfort with the black pills.

As he stood there before me in the early morning light, I was aware of some subtle change in his appearance. It was fully six months since I had seen him last, but in some vague way he looked younger. Haggard he was, with an ugly cut showing on his temple, but not so lined as I remembered him. Some former man seemed to be struggling through the opium-scarred surface. His eyes were brighter, and I noted with surprise that he wore decent clothes and was clean shaved.

"Good morning, Jim," he said; "you remember me, don't you?"

As he spoke I observed, too, that his manner had altered. He who had consorted with the sweepings of the doss-houses now addressed me as a courteous gentleman addresses an inferior--not haughtily or patronizingly, but with a note of conscious superiority and self-respect wholly unfamiliar. Almost it threw me off my guard, but remembering in the nick of time that I was still "Jim":

"Of course I remember you, Cap'n," I said. "Step inside."

"Thanks," he replied, and followed me into the little room.

I placed for him the arm-chair which our friend the fireman had so recently occupied, but:

"I won't sit down," he said.

And now I observed that he was evidently in a condition of repressed excitement. Perhaps he saw the curiosity in my glance, for he suddenly rested both his hands on my shoulders, and:

"Yes, I have given up the dope, Jim," he said---"done with it for ever. There's not a soul in this neighbourhood I can trust, yet if ever a man wanted a pal, I want one to-day. Now, you're square, my lad. I always knew that, in spite of the dope; and if I ask you to do a little thing that means a lot to me, I think you will do it. Am I right?"

"If it can be done, I'll do it," said I.

"Then, listen. I'm leaving England in the Patna for Singapore. She sails at noon to-morrow, and passengers go on board at ten o'clock. I've got my ticket, papers in order, but"--he paused impressively, grasping my shoulders hard--"I must get on board to-night."

I stared him in the face.

"Why?" I asked.

He returned my look with one searching and eager; then:

"If I show you the reason," said he, "and trust you with all my papers, will you go down to the dock--it's no great distance--and ask to see Marryat, the chief officer? Perhaps you've sailed with him?"

"No," I replied guardedly. "I was never in the Patna."

"Never mind. When you give him a letter which I shall write he will make the necessary arrangements for me to occupy my state-room to-night. I knew him well," he explained, "in--the old days. Will you do it, Jim?"

"I'll do it with pleasure," I answered.

"Shake!" said Captain Dan.

We shook hands heartily, and:

"Now I'll show you the reason," he added. "Come upstairs."

Turning, he led the way upstairs to his own room, and wondering greatly, I followed him in. Never having been in Captain Dan's apartments I cannot say whether they, like their occupant, had changed for the better. But I found myself in a room surprisingly clean and with a note of culture in its appointments which was even more surprising.

On a couch by the window, wrapped in a fur rug, lay the prettiest half-caste girl I had ever seen, East or West. Her skin was like cream rose petals and her abundant hair was of wonderful lustrous black. Perhaps it was her smooth warm colour which suggested the idea, but

as her cheeks flushed at sight of Captain Dan and the long dark eyes lighted up in welcome, I thought of a delicate painting on ivory and I wondered more and more what it all could mean.

"I have brought Jim to see you," said Captain Dan. "No, don't trouble to move dear."

But even before he had spoken I had seen the girl wince with pain as she had endeavoured to sit up to greet us. She lay on her side in a rather constrained attitude, but although her sudden movement had brought tears to her eyes she smiled bravely and extended a tiny ivory hand to me.

"This is my wife, Jim!" said Captain Dan.

I could find no words at all, but merely stood there looking very awkward and feeling almost awed by the indescribable expression of trust in the eyes of the little Eurasian, as with her tiny fingers hidden in her husband's clasp she lay looking up at him.

"Now you know, Jim," said he, "why we must get aboard the Patna to-night. My wife is really too ill to travel; in fact, I shall have to carry her down to the cab, and such a proceeding in daylight would attract an enormous crowd in this neighbourhood!"

"Give me the letters and the papers," I answered. "I will start now."

His wife disengaged her hand and extended it to me.

"Thank you," she said, in a queer little silver-bell voice; "you are good. I shall always love you."

IV

THE SECRET OF MA LORENZO

It must have been about eleven o'clock that night when Paul Harley rang me up. Since we had parted in the early morning I had had no word from him, and I was all anxiety to tell him of the quaint little romance which unknown to us had had its setting in the room above.

In accordance with my promise I had seen the chief officer of the Patna; and from the start of surprise which he gave on opening "Captain Dan's" letter, I judged that Mr. Marryat and the man who for so long had sunk to the lowest rung of the ladder had been close friends in those "old days." At any rate, he had proceeded to make the necessary arrangements without a moment's delay, and the couple were to go on board the Patna at nine o'clock.

It was with a sense of having done at least one good deed that I finally quitted our Limehouse base and returned to my rooms. Now, at eleven o'clock at night:

"Can you come round to Chancery Lane at once?" said Harley. "I want you to run down to Pennyfields with me."

"Some development in the Kwen Lung business?"

"Hardly a development, but I'm not satisfied, Knox. I hate to be beaten."

Twenty minutes later I was sitting in Harley's study, watching him restlessly promenading up and down before the fire.

"The police searched Kwen Lung's place from foundation to tiles," he said. "I was there myself. Old Kwen Lung conveniently kept out of the way--still playing fan-tan, no doubt! But Ma Lorenzo was in evidence. She blandly declared that Kwen Lung never had a daughter! And in the absence of our friend the fireman, who sailed in the Seahawk, and whose evidence, by the way, is legally valueless--what could we do? They could find nobody in the neighbourhood prepared to state that Kwen Lung had a daughter or that Kwen Lung had no daughter. There are all sorts of fables about the old fox, but the facts about him are harder to get at."

"But," I explained, "the bloodstains on the joss!"

"Ma Lorenzo stumbled and fell there on the previous night, striking her skull against the foot of the figure."

"What nonsense!" I cried. "We should have seen the wound last night."

"We might have done," said Harley musingly; "I don't know when she inflicted it on herself; but I did see it this morning."

"What!"

"Oh, the gash is there all right, partly covered by her hair."

He stood still, staring at me oddly.

"One meets with cases of singular devotion in unexpected quarters sometimes," he said.

"You mean that the woman inflicted the wound upon herself in order-----"

"To save old Kwen Lung--exactly! It's marvellous."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "And the window?"

"Oh! it was broken right enough--by two drunken sailormen fighting in the court outside! Sash and everything smashed to splinters."

He began irritably to pace the carpet again.

"It must have been a devil of a fight!" he added savagely.

"Meanwhile," said I, "where is old Kwen Lung hiding?"

"But more particularly," cried Harley, "where has he hidden the poor victim? Come along, Knox! I'm going down there for a final look round."

"Of course the premises are being watched?"

"Of course--and also, of course, I shall be the laughing stock of Scotland Yard if nothing results."

It was close on midnight when once more I found myself in Pennyfields. Carried away by Harley's irritable excitement I had quite forgotten the romance of Captain Dan; and when, having exchanged greetings with the detective on duty hard by the house of Kwen Lung, we presently found ourselves in the presence of Ma Lorenzo, I scarcely knew for a moment if I were "Jim" or my proper self.

"Is Kwen Lung in?" asked Harley sternly.

The woman shook her head.

"No," she replied; "he sometimes stop away a whole week."

"Does he?" jerked Harley. "Come in, Knox; we'll take another look round."

A moment later I found myself again in the room of the golden joss. The red curtain had been removed from before the shattered window, but otherwise the place looked exactly as it had looked before. The atmosphere was much less stale, however, but there was something repellent about the great gilded idol smiling eternally from his pedestal beside the door.

I stared into the leering face, and it was the face of one who knew and who might have said: "Yes! this and other things equally strange have I beheld in many lands as well as England. Much I could tell. Many things grim and terrible, and some few joyous; for behold! I smile but am silent."

For a while Harley stared abstractedly at the bloodstains on the pedestal of the joss and upon the floor beneath from which the matting had been pulled back. Suddenly he turned to Ma Lorenzo:

"Where have you hidden the body?" he demanded.

Watching her, I thought I saw the woman flinch, but there was enough of the Oriental in her composition to save her from self-betrayal. She shook her head slowly, watching Harley through half-closed eyes.

"Nobody hab," she replied.

And I thought for once that her lapse into pidgin had been deliberate and not accidental.

When finally we quitted the house of the missing Kwen Lung, and when, Harley having curtly acknowledged "good night" from the detective on duty, we came out into Limehouse Causeway.

"You have not overlooked the possibility, Harley," I said, "that this woman's explanation may be true, and that the fireman of the Seahawk may have been entertaining us with an account of a weird dream?"

"No!" snapped Harley--"neither will Scotland Yard overlook it."

He was in a particularly impossible mood, for he so rarely made mistakes that to be detected in one invariably brought out those petulant traits of character which may have been due in some measure to long residence in the East. Recognizing that he would rather be alone I parted from him at the corner of Chancery Lane and returned to my own chambers. Furthermore, I was very tired, for it was close upon two o'clock, and on turning in I very promptly went to sleep, nor did I awaken until late in the morning.

For some odd reason, but possibly because the fact had occurred to me just as I was retiring, I remembered at the moment of waking that I had not told Harley about the romantic wedding of Captain Dan. As I had left my friend in very ill humour I thought that this would be a good excuse for an early call, and just before eleven o'clock I walked into his office. Innes, his invaluable secretary, showed me into the study at the back.

"Hallo, Knox," said Harley, looking up from a little silver Buddha which he was examining, "have you come to ask for news of the Kwen Lung case?"

"No," I replied. "Is there any?"

Harley shook his head.

"It seems like fate," he declared, "that this thing should have been sent to me this morning." He indicated the silver Buddha. "A present from a friend who knows my weakness for Chinese ornaments," he explained grimly. "It reminds me of that damned joss of Kwen Lung's!"

I took up the little image and examined it with interest. It was most beautifully fashioned in the patient Oriental way, and there was a little hinged door in the back which fitted so perfectly that when closed it was quite impossible to detect its presence. I glanced at

Harley.

"I suppose you didn't find a jewel inside?" I said lightly.

"No," he replied; "there was nothing inside."

But even as he uttered the words his whole expression changed, and so suddenly as to startle me. He sprang up from the table, and:

"Have you an hour to spare, Knox?" he cried excitedly.

"I can spare an hour, but what for?"

"For Kwen Lung!"

Four minutes later we were speeding in the direction of Limehouse, and not a word of explanation to account for this sudden journey could I extract from my friend. Therefore I beguiled the time by telling him of my adventure with Captain Dan.

Harley listened to the story in unbroken silence, but at its termination he brought his hand down sharply on my knee.

"I have been almost perfectly blind, Knox," he said; "but not quite so perfectly blind as you!"

I stared at him in amazement, but he merely laughed and offered no explanation of his words.

Presently, then, I found myself yet again in the familiar room of the golden joss. Ma Lorenzo, in whom some hidden anxiety seemed to have increased since I had last seen her, stood at the top of the stairs watching us. Upon what idea my friend was operating and what he intended to do I could not imagine; but without a word to the woman he crossed the room and grasping the great golden idol with both arms he dragged it forward across the floor!

As he did so there was a stifled shriek, and Ma Lorenzo, stumbling down the steps, threw herself on her knees before Harley! Raising imploring hands:

"No, no!" she moaned. "Not until I tell you--I tell you everything first!"

"To begin with, tell me how to open this thing," he said sternly.

Momentarily she hesitated, and did not rise from her knees, but:

"Do you hear me?" he cried.

The woman rose unsteadily and walking slowly round the joss manipulated some hidden fastening, whereupon the entire back of the thing opened

like a door! From what was within she shudderingly averted her face, but Harley, stepping back against the wall, stopped and peered into the cavity.

"Good God!" he muttered. "Come and look, Knox."

Prepared by his manner for some gruesome spectacle, I obeyed--and from that which I saw I recoiled in horror.

"Harley," I whispered, "Harley! who is it?"

The spectacle had truly sickened me. Crouched within the narrow space enclosed by the figure of the idol was the body of an old and wrinkled Chinaman! His knees were drawn up to his chin, and his head so compressed upon them that little of his features could be seen.

"It is Kwen Lung!" murmured Ma Lorenzo, standing with clasped hands and wild eyes over by the window. "Kwen Lung--and I am glad he is dead!"

Such a note of hatred came into her voice as I had never heard in the voice of any woman.

"He is vile, a demon, a mocking cruel demon! Long, long years ago I would have killed him, but always I was afraid. I tell you everything, everything. This is how he comes to be dead. The little one"--again her voice changed and a note of almost grotesque tenderness came into it--"the lotus-flower, that is his own daughter's child, flesh of his flesh, he keeps a prisoner as the women of China are kept, up there"--she raised one fat finger aloft--"up above. He does not know that someone comes to see her--someone who used to come to smoke but who gave it up because he had looked into the dear one's eye. He does not know that she goes with me to see her man. Ah! we think he does not know! I--I arrange it all. A week ago they were married. Tuesday night, when Kwen Lung die, I plan for her to steal away for ever, for ever."

Tears now were running down the woman's fat cheeks, and her voice quivered emotionally.

"For me it is the end, but for her it is the beginning of life. All right! I don't matter a damn! She is young and beautiful. Ah, God! so beautiful! A drunken pig comes here and finds his way in, so I give him the smoke and presently he sleeps, but it makes delay, and I don't know how soon Kwen Lung, that yellow demon, will wake. For he is like the bats who sleep all day and wake at night.

"At last the sailor pig sleeps and I call softly to my dear little one that the time has come. I have gone out into the street, locking the door behind me, to see if her man is waiting, and I hear her shrieks--her shrieks! I hurry back. My hands tremble so much that I can scarcely unlock the door. At last I enter, and I see and I know--that yellow devil has learned all and has been playing with us like cat and mouse! He is lashing her, with a great whip! Lashing her--that tiny,

sweet flower. Ah!"

She choked in her utterance, and turning to the gilded joss which contained the dead Chinaman she shook her clenched hands at it, and the expression on her face I can never forget. Then:

"As I shriek curses at him, crash goes the window--and I see her husband spring into the room! The tender one had fallen, there at the foot of the joss, and Kwen Lung, his teeth gleaming--like a rat--like a devil--turns to meet him. So he is when her man strike him, once. Just once, here." She rested her hand upon her heart. "And he falls--and he coughs. He lie still. For him it is finished. That devil heart has ceased to beat. Ah!"

She threw up her hands, and:

"That is all. I tell you no more."

"One thing more," said Harley sternly; "the name of the man who killed Kwen Lung?"

At that Ma Lorenzo slowly raised her head and folded her arms across her bosom. There was something one could never forget in the expression of her fat face.

"Not if you burn me alive!" she answered in a low voice. "No one ever knows that--from me."

She sank on to the divan and buried her face in her hands. Her fat shoulders shook grotesquely; and Harley stood perfectly still staring across at her for fully a minute. I could hear voices in the street outside and the hum of traffic in Limehouse Causeway.

Then my friend did a singular thing. Walking over to the gilded joss he reclosed the opening and not without a great effort pushed the great idol back against the wall.

"There are times, Knox," he said, staring at me oddly, "when I'm glad that I am not an official agent of the law."

While I watched him dumfounded he walked across to the woman and touched her on the shoulder. She raised her tear-stained face.

"All right," she whispered. "I am ready."

"Get ready as soon as you like," said he tersely.

"I'll have the man removed who is watching the house, and you can reckon on forty-eight hours to make yourself scarce."

With never another word he seized me by the arm and hurried me out of the place! Ten paces along the street a shabby-looking fellow was

standing, leaning against a pillar. Harley stopped, and:

"Even the greatest men make mistakes sometimes, Hewitt," he remarked.

"I'm throwing up the case; probably Inspector Wessex will do the same.
Good morning."

On towards the Causeway he led me--for not a word was I capable of uttering; and just before we reached that artery of Chinatown, from down-river came the deep, sustained note of a steamer's siren, the warning of some big liner leaving dock.

"That will be the Patna," said Harley. "She sails at twelve o'clock, I think you said?"

THE RING WITH THE GREEN STONE

by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

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Ann Livingstone sat swaying back and forth in her green cane rocker on her front porch. About her was such strength of green light of tree-boughs, ruffling in a southwest wind, that even the folds of her black-silk skirt showed faint reflexes of that color. Her smooth, blond hair had a greenish cast. It was, of all her fair, slender, middle-aged figure, as if it were seen through depths of levels of green water, like a mermaid's. It may be that people, like landscapes, have their color-schemes. Ann had always loved the soothing background color of the earth-green. She had surrounded herself with it. Her home was vine-screened and surrounded by trees and hedges. In her youth she had worn green gowns; now she wore black, and left the green to her daughter Ruth, who had inherited her mother's love of the color.

The porch was sweet with blooming roses and elder-flowers, and other indefinite odors, blending in a bouquet of perfume. Presently there cut through it a pungent odor of tobacco. Ann glanced over her shoulder and saw her brother Stephen's face framed in a window. It was a large, handsome, elderly face, white-bearded and keen-eyed.

"Has Ruth come?" the man asked.

"No. I am waiting for her. You know she stayed at Jim Gordon's mother's longer than she expected. Charlotte Gordon was perfectly sweet when Jim became engaged to Ruth; she insisted that he should use the setting of her own engagement-ring for the one he gave Ruth, and it was too small and had to be enlarged."

"What became of the stone in Jim's mother's own ring?"

"She must have lost it, I suppose. Anyway, the setting is hand-wrought Indian gold and very beautiful."

"What is the stone?"

"Oh, an emerald, of course. Ruth is as much a crank over green as her old mother. Here she comes now. She will be so delighted to see you."

The man lounged out as a car rolled up, and a girl sprang out. She was fair, like her mother, very pretty, and clad in pale green like a fairy. She fluttered lightly up the steps, kissed her mother, and made round blue eyes of interrogation at the man.

"Your uncle Stephen, dearest," said Ann. "He has left the West for good, and is going to stay here with us."

The girl made a dart at the man. She flung her arms around his neck. She was curiously childlike in her ways. Her voice even struck unexpectedly sudden high, sweet cadences, like a child's.

"I am so glad you have come, Uncle Stephen!" said she.

Ruth's hair was of a light, feathery quality, fluffed about her small face. She stood looking at her uncle smilingly, and teetered a little on her toes, with an effect of dancing.

"Does she look like me, Stephen?" asked Ann.

"She looks like herself, and nobody else on earth, unless it is a queer kind of humming-bird," said Stephen.

He held the girl off and shook her slender shoulders and regarded her with tenderness, this little, slight beauty of a girl, who looked at him with the questioning eyes of a child, ready to be loved, ready to shrink if flouted. Suddenly a serious expression came over her face.

"You know about Jim?" she asked. "Mother has told you?"

"She has told me you were going to leave just as I got where I could see a little of you and your mother after all these years," said Stephen. He looked rather grave. His own romance of life had failed.

"Jim and I are always to spend our summers here," said Ruth; "and if you stay with mother, everything will be just complete. All that troubled me was leaving mother, winters. Of course she will stay a great deal in the city with Jim and me. And now you can come, too, Uncle Stephen. I am not going to leave."

"Girls like you are born to leave," said Stephen, laughing. "What are wings for?"

Ruth, starting quickly, stood away and gazed intently at her left hand.

"What is the matter, Ruth?" asked her mother.

"My ring doesn't shine as much as I thought it did," Ruth answered.

"It is only because it is so dark in here. You must remember this porch is always twilight with the vines."

"I suppose that is it. But it startled me all of a sudden. It had always blazed up in my eyes like a green dewdrop, and then it did not."

"Nonsense," said Ann. "You forget that no jewel except a diamond will show much light in a gloomy place."

"And not all diamonds," said Stephen. His shrewd eyes looked shrewder. "May I see your ring now, Ruth?" he asked.

Ruth extended her hand simply. She looked at him for admiration. Stephen bent over the little hand, on which was the ring with the large green stone. He gave a hardly perceptible start.

"Isn't it a beauty, Uncle Stephen?"

"Do you object to taking the ring off, dear?" asked Stephen.

Ruth laughed. "Oh, goodness, no! I am not superstitious, and, anyway, the ring has been off since Jim put it on a number of times. The setting was Mrs. Gordon's, Jim's mother's. It was too large, and it had to be altered. I was without any engagement-ring for several days while I was away."

Ruth took the ring from her finger and handed it to her uncle. He rose leisurely and went down the steps into the broad sunlight. When he returned he looked pale, but he was smiling.

Ruth held out her hand for the ring. "Isn't it wonderful, Uncle Stephen?" she cried, eagerly.

"Yes, very wonderful. Nothing like an emerald for beauty among the whole list of gems," replied Stephen.

While his niece was readjusting the ring he made a slight gesture to his sister.

"You had better go to your room and change your dress for dinner, dear," Ann said immediately.

After the girl had gone Stephen turned to his sister, and her face was as pale as his. "What is it, Stephen?"

"Ann, you must simply call up your courage."

"I am ready," said she, steadily.

"That stone is not an emerald. It is only a clever imitation."

"Stephen!"

"I am positive. I know quite a good deal about gems. It is a clever imitation; I have never seen one just like it. When the child spoke about its not shining I began to suspect. When I had it down there in the sunlight, I knew."

"Stephen, do you realize the full import if it is not?"

"Yes, I am afraid I do. Can the child hear?"

"No; her room is on the other side."

"It means a good deal more than a fake gem. It means a fake man."

"Stephen, there must be some mistake. Jim Gordon is the soul of honor. He cannot know."

"Where did he buy the stone?"

"At Lord & Lovejoy's."

"The best and most reliable firm in the city. Are you sure?"

"He said so. He said, and laughed, that he had to take their word for it; that he knew nothing about precious stones. He said that they declared it was the finest emerald that had ever come into their possession."

Stephen Ward looked grim. "I will make it my business to see these gentlemen to-morrow," said he. "I will take the ring in and ask a few questions."

"Stephen, Ruth will suspect."

"She will have to know finally, I fear, in simple justice to her and her future life. But she will not suspect to-morrow. The stone is a little loose in the setting. Queer work that is for a firm like Lord & Lovejoy."

"Stephen."

"What, dear? Don't look so pale."

"There may be a dishonest salesman."

"Yes, there may be. I intend to find out."

"It is not, of course, the value of the stone," said Ann in a low, distressed voice. "It is the imputation cast upon —"

"The man who gave it to her? Yes."

"Jim is rich. He can afford anything. But if he were poor — to give her an imitation gem and tell her it was an emerald —"

"It means, of course, that the man ranks with the spurious stone," said Stephen Ward.

"Don't tell Ruth."

"Why, Ann, would you dare not tell her?"

"It would break her heart."

"It might be a cleaner break than she would get if she married the man."

"It may be the salesman. You know there are dishonest salesmen. You know there are, Stephen."

"Yes, there are. We will call it the salesman to-night. We won't let the child suspect. There is no sense in doing that until I have made sure." Stephen sat staring gloomily. He was reflecting. "A firm like Lord & Lovejoy does not employ dishonest salesmen." The sentence rang in his mental consciousness; however, he concealed it.

The next morning it was easy enough to tell Ruth that he had discovered when he had examined the ring the night before that the setting was loose, and that he was going to the city on business, and would take the ring to the jeweler's and have it attended to, and bring it back with him that night.

Ruth agreed in a panic. "Oh," she cried, "how perfectly dreadful it would be if I had lost my beautiful emerald the way Jim's mother lost the stone from this same setting! Oh, do take it, Uncle Stephen, and be sure they fix it to-day, because Jim may be here to-morrow, and I don't want him to find me without it."

When Stephen returned that night he found his sister alone on the porch.

"Ruth has gone out in the Waites' car," she said.

"I am glad," said Stephen, settling heavily into a chair and wiping his forehead. The day had been warm.

Ann looked at him, with apprehension.

"It is pretty bad, Ann. That is, it looks pretty bad."

"The salesman?"

"I was at once assured, with no questions on my part, by the senior member of the firm, that of course no one in their employ could be for a second suspected. I had to agree. The supposition is as practically impossible, with people like that, as spurious stones."

"Then —?"

"I saw Mr. Lord and his son, and Mr. Lovejoy and others. I stayed an hour in their private office. A magnificent emerald was put in the setting of this ring."

Stephen took the little box from his pocket, opened it, and removed the ring. The green stone, exactly the color of an emerald, greeted their scrutiny like a defiant eye of mystery. "They said a great deal about the beauty of the setting," Stephen remarked, gloomily.

"And the stone?"

"They said very little. I said very little. What could I say? The members of that old firm are gentlemen. Besides, my position was peculiar. I could not accuse them of selling an imitation emerald to the man engaged to be married to my own niece. You understand very well that —"

Ann's face paled, and took on an expression as of one who faced fire. "I understand perfectly that a counter-accusation might have been made; and yet, Jim Gordon —"

"Jim is no more of a gentleman, he has no greater reputation for honor, than the members of that old and honorable commercial house."

"Jim simply could not knowingly have given Ruth a spurious emerald for a betrothal ring," Ann said.

"No; I agree with you. He could not. He did not. And yet —"

"You think Ruth must be told?"

"It is imperative that Ruth be told."

"She will not be in the least influenced. Her faith in Jim will not waver a hair."

"All the same, in simple justice to the child, she must be told."

Ann leaned her head back on her chair. "You will have to tell her, Stephen," she said, faintly. "Ruth must not associate her own mother with this horrible thing."

"Very well, I will tell her," replied Stephen. "It is not an enviable task, but I agree with you. She must not have the first shock from her mother. It is monstrous."

"She will be home before long," said Ann. She regarded her brother pitifully.

"You go to your room, old girl, and lie down, and leave me to face the music," Stephen said, kindly.

He was sitting alone on the porch, smoking, when Ruth returned. Her uncle thought he had never seen her look so lovely and so radiantly happy.

"Such a ride!" she cried. "And I have had a note from Jim, and he's coming to-night."

"Here is your ring, my dear," said Stephen. There was nothing unusual in his voice. Ruth held out her hand readily for the ring. She looked at the green stone and frowned a little.

"Strange how dim the emerald looks in here," she said.

"Do you want me to tell you why, my dear?"

Ruth gazed at him. "Why? I don't understand what you mean, Uncle Stephen."

"You know that I am rather wise about gems?"

"Yes, of course. Mother has told me. I know you have a valuable collection."

"Are you sure you want me to tell you?"

"To tell why my emerald looks so very dim in this light? Yes."

"My dear Ruth, it is not an emerald."

"What is it?"

"A very clever imitation."

Ruth's face did not change color, but all the lines seemed to harden. It was like watching the petrification of a rose.

Suddenly Ann's face appeared in the doorway. Her anxiety had not allowed her to remain absent. She listened, pale and breathless.

"Why do you think that?" Ruth asked in an even voice.

"I know considerable about gems. I have the opinions of Lord & Lovejoy and a recognized expert. That stone is not an emerald. They did not sell that stone. Moreover, that firm never allowed a ring to leave their house as badly set as that was yesterday."

Ruth turned slightly and saw her mother. "Will Lord & Lovejoy or anybody else make this public?" she asked.

"I have their word of honor that they will not, and you know that neither your mother nor I will, but Ruth —"

Ruth faced them both in a sudden whirl of defiance. "Listen," she said in her voice with the high, childish note — "listen. I do not care what Lord & Lovejoy say; I do not care what anybody on earth says; I do not care now; I shall never care. I do not care whether this green stone in this ring is an emerald or not. It does not concern me. All that concerns me is Jim. All the world and all the precious stones in the world can never make any difference with me. I do not know anything about this green stone. I do not know how it got in the ring. Understand, mother; understand, Uncle Stephen, I do not care. You are never to speak to me of this again."

"But, Ruth, you — must believe —" Ann began, faintly.

"I believe nothing, either one way or the other," replied Ruth, with a sort of fierce radiance. "It is only that I do not care. It all means nothing to me. I love Jim, and he loves me. That is all. No green stone can separate us."

Ruth kissed her mother and passed her, going into the house.

A ghastly expression was over Ann's face. "She will go on and marry him," she said. "She will not speak of it to Jim. She knows nobody else will. As a matter of fact, I don't see how anybody ever can. There is no possible substantiality back of it. Jim Gordon never changed a real emerald for a false one and gave it to my girl."

"I suppose that is true," Stephen said, thoughtfully. "I don't really think one man at Lord & Lovejoy's suspected him. As a matter of fact, I wonder if they were not much nearer suspecting me. We cannot say one word to Jim, and yet, Ann, to let this marriage go on —"

"I am her mother," said Ann, in a tragic voice.

"Ruth tells me that Jim is coming to-night."

"Is he? She has heard, then. I thought he would come. Well, nothing can be done to-night. We must wait. Something may throw light on the matter. I must go and dress now. We simply have to wait developments."

"I suppose you are right," assented Stephen, "but sometimes it has seemed to me that developments needed the lash and spur more than anything on God's earth." He sighed, and followed his sister into the house.

Stephen was right about his estimate of the slowness of developments. Nothing whatever developed concerning the ring. The engagement was to be a short one. Ruth went on with her preparations. Jim was often at the house. The more Stephen saw of him, the more it seemed impossible to suspect him.

One evening shortly before the day set for the marriage, Jim unconsciously strengthened his own cause. He had been watching Ruth's slender hand move as she was sewing, and suddenly he said: "Give me your hand a second, Ruth. No; rather, take the emerald off. I want to look at it."

Ruth obeyed. Then she bent her head closely over her work. Jim held the ring up to the light. He shook his head.

"I know absolutely nothing about gems," he said, "but if I had not bought this emerald from Lord & Lovejoy's I would most certainly think I had been cheated. Of course it must be the magnificent emerald they told me it was, but I must say I would never dream it. Mr. Ward, you look at the thing. You are a connoisseur. You tell me what you think of it."

Ruth shot one glance at her uncle as he took the ring. It was rather a terrible glance. It was full of deadly terror, of fierce command. Stephen nodded slightly at her. He held the ring up to the light.

"Of course it must be all right, coming from such a firm as that," he said.

"Yes, I suppose so, but how does it look to you?"

"It has the perfect emerald color," Stephen said.

"I know that, but somehow, to me — of course I am no judge — it lacks life."

"How can you, Jim?" said Ruth, sharply. "It is perfectly beautiful. Jewels are not alive."

"That is just it," said Jim. "I had a vague idea that they were. What do you think, Mr. Ward?"

"The perfect emerald tint," Stephen repeated. "As for the rest, I don't pretend to be exactly an expert on precious stones, though I might assume that I was on semi-precious."

"I have half a mind to take that ring to Lord & Lovejoy's to-morrow," said Jim, as he gave it back to Ruth.

She started and paled. "Jim, you can't," she cried.

"I hardly see how you can," said Stephen. "Lord & Lovejoy have such a reputation that it would amount to an insult."

"I suppose you are right," Jim said, doubtfully. "I suppose it would not do, and the stone must be just what they represented. I am no judge. Sometimes I think that education, generally speaking, should provide knowledge of things of such value."

"It is a magnificent ring," said Ruth, "and I shall refuse to take it off many more times. I shall begin to be superstitious."

After Jim and Ruth had gone for a little stroll in the moonlight, Ann looked at her brother. "What did you think of that?" she asked.

"He is either absolutely above suspicion or the cleverest impostor of his generation," said Stephen. "Personally I have no doubt. The man simply does not know. Sometimes I wonder if —"

"What?"

"If he ought not, in common justice, to be told."

"Stephen, how could he be told without implying suspicion?"

"I confess I don't see," replied Stephen, thoughtfully. "If it was anything on earth except an engagement-ring, and if we were not so absolutely sure, in spite of this evidence, that the man is all right! I am sure of that. At first, before I had seen so much of him — I did not own it to you — but I doubted. Now I am as sure of him as I am of myself; perhaps I am surer. I am inclined to think a jury would find the case rather strong against me." Stephen laughed.

"Don't laugh, brother. It is dreadful, in spite of everything. How do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it. I have a firm opinion that there is a large class of incidents in this world beyond all known laws of accountability. I think poor Ruth's bogus emerald belongs to that class. We must simply put it out of our minds as much as possible, Ann."

"I see no other way, with the wedding next week," said Ann, miserably. "I hope everything will be right, and Ruth will be happy; but she is my only child, and to begin her matrimonial life with a sham gem for her betrothal-ring — Oh, Stephen, are you sure it is sham?"

"I wish I were not sure," Stephen said, fervently.

Ruth was married the next week. Not one word had been said to her about the ring after her conversation with her uncle. She had seemed radiantly happy. If she had a shade of distrust, she did not betray it; but

she probably had none. Ruth was essentially feminine. She placed affection and emotion in the vanguard of her life. She was even capable of entirely dismissing reason and logic for the sake of preserving in integrity her affection and trust.

Ann thought sometimes that she did in this case. After the wedding, when the young couple had gone, she spoke of it to her brother.

"I really wonder if Ruth believes what you told her," she said. The two were sitting alone in the room sweet with Ruth's bridal flowers.

"She believes it, but she has hidden the belief from herself," said Stephen. "I know that type of woman, and Ruth is a perfect specimen of it."

"I hope she will be happy."

"It will take more than a sham emerald to make her unhappy with a man whom she loves as she loves Jim," replied Stephen. "If there is any alchemy in faith and love, Ruth will have that stone pure emerald before she has done with it. She will be happy. Don't worry, Ann."

Stephen was right. Ruth was entirely happy in her new life. She and Jim had been married nearly two years before the next unexplainable thing happened about the ring with the green stone. Ruth and Jim had just come to Ann's place for the summer, and Stephen noticed at once that Ruth was not wearing the ring. She spoke about it to him the next day. She looked confused, which was unusual for her.

"Are you going to the city to-day, Uncle Stephen?" she said.

Jim had already left on an early train, and she and her uncle were alone on the porch. Ann was busy in the house. Stephen detected an anxious note in the girl's voice.

"Why, yes, I thought I would go," he replied. "I have a little matter of business to attend to, and it is a good day, not too hot. Anything you want me to do?"

Ruth hesitated. She even flushed a little. "If you are sure it will not bother you, I do wish you would leave my ring, my engagement-ring, you know" — Ruth's voice was hesitant — "at Lord & Lovejoy's. My finger is larger. You know I have gained a little flesh. Lately, when Jim has not been at home to notice it, I have not worn it. It has hurt me. I could not get it on yesterday. Jim did not notice, and I was glad. I want the setting enlarged just a little. I have the piece which they took from the original setting, you know. They said it had better be kept in case it ever needed changing."

"I will be glad to take the ring to Lord & Lovejoy's, my dear," said Stephen. Inwardly he realized a rueful sensation. He had been almost convinced that he had been an object of suspicion to some of the gentlemen in that jewelry firm. He made no comment on the fact that Jim had not been told of the tightness of the ring, and had not been commissioned to do the errand. "Get the ring, my dear," said Stephen. "I am going on the eleven-five train."

Before leaving, Stephen had a chance for a word with his sister. He told her of Ruth's request.

Ann looked anxious. "Somehow I dislike to have that ring taken anywhere, or brought into discussion again," said she. "Ruth seems so perfectly happy in her married life, and that ring with its green stone has always seemed to me a danger-mark."

"Don't worry, Ann," said Stephen. "Nothing can come of it unless Lord & Lovejoy have me arrested on

suspicion."

"Oh, Stephen!"

"I don't think they will," said Stephen, reassuringly. "I was really the only person whom Ruth could ask to do the errand, you know."

"Yes, I do know," said Ann, "but it is rather hard on you, Stephen. Why don't you take the ring to another place?"

"Oh, it is a particular piece of work, and that is the best place in the city. And, besides, on the whole, I find it rather amusing to be suspected."

Stephen grinned and got into the car which was to take him to the station. He returned on an unexpectedly early train. He found the house very quiet. The day had proved warm, after all. Everybody except the servants was lying down. Stephen went directly to his sister's door and rapped.

"It is Stephen," he said, warily. "Put on a dressing-gown and come down to the library. I have something important to tell you."

When Ann in her white-silk negligée entered the library, her brother spoke at once. "Ann," he said, "I verily believe Satan himself has a finger in that affair of the ring with the green stone. What do you think has happened now?"

"What?" Ann gasped.

"Don't be frightened. I don't think it is anything to be frightened about unless you are scared of the occult. However, the affair has savored of the occult all through. Ann, that green stone is an emerald!"

Ann stared at him, her face paling.

"And not only that, but the emerald, the original emerald."

"Stephen!"

"All suspicion seems now removed from me, but, unluckily, it centers elsewhere. I was even asked very delicately concerning poor Jim's success in his profession. It was hinted, so delicately as to suggest the thought of butterflies' wings, that money could have been raised on such a valuable stone, and then, when the financial pressure was removed, the stone restored."

"Stephen, that is monstrous. What did you say?"

"I also used butterflies' wings for defense, and, I believe, swerved suspicion from Jim. I am inclined to think that now Lord & Lovejoy share my opinion concerning a large number of unexplainable events in the world. Mr. Lovejoy even went the length of saying that jewels were queer things, and that queer things happened. I left the firm titillated by mystery."

"Shall you tell Ruth?"

"I ask you that."

"Stephen, I don't know. Her faith in Jim is so beautiful. She has believed so, in spite of the evidence of

reason and common sense, that I am not sure she has not been wearing a jewel more precious than any on earth. She will, of course, say, when she knows, that everybody has been mistaken. All that wonderful faith, in the face of everything, will lose its value. Stephen, are you sure you were right?"

"Sure that the stone I first saw was not an emerald? I wish I were as sure of anything else. Ann, I know. That was no emerald which I carried to Lord & Lovejoy's two years ago."

"But you don't think that Jim —"

"Pawned it? Not for a second. It is simply another incident of that unexplainable class. Shall I tell Ruth?"

"Let me think of it overnight."

But Ann thought of it longer, for that night Jim and Ruth were summoned by a telegram to the little suburban village where Charlotte Gordon had her permanent home. She had been staying with her son in the city for several weeks, and had gone home when they went for the summer to Ruth's mother's place.

Charlotte Gordon had been seized by her last illness. She died in a week's time, and it was two weeks before the family were settled into a saddened peace for the summer. Jim had worshiped his mother, and Ruth had grown very fond of her.

It was three weeks after Charlotte had been buried that the third incident happened with regard to the ring, or as all, with the exception of Jim himself, thought with regard to the ring. He did not know. He never knew.

One evening he came down-stairs bringing a tiny box. He went to Stephen with it. "I found this in poor mother's jewel-casket," he said. "She had some valuable jewelry; not much, but good. This puzzled me. It was in a box by itself. See what you think of it, Uncle Stephen."

Stephen opened the box. Inside was a tiny twist of green tissue-paper on a bed of green jeweler's cotton. Stephen carefully untwisted the paper. They were all out on the vine-screened porch. They crowded around to look. Stephen held between his thumb and forefinger a large, green stone. He felt a thrill of horror. He knew that stone. He glanced at Ann. She looked pale and frightened. Ruth looked excited. Jim was the only one who wore the natural expression of simple curiosity.

"Is it an emerald?" Jim asked. "It is the same color as Ruth's emerald."

"It is the same color, but it is not an emerald," replied Stephen.

"The light is very dim here," said Ruth.

"That makes no difference. It is not an emerald."

Ruth looked triumphantly at the ring on her finger. "Then — this —" she began.

Ann interrupted her daughter. She held a letter in her hand. She looked pale and solemn. "I have a letter here which I must read," she said. She turned to Jim. "It is from your mother," she said. "She had it sent to me with the request that I read it to all of you. It is not exactly a letter, but a statement. I hesitate to read it because, although she excuses him, it may involve your father, Jim."

Jim started. "Read it," he said, grimly. His father had died when he was a mere boy. His memory of him was loyal, but not wholly tending to admiration. "It is high time this ghastly green mystery is cleared up if

it can be," said Jim Gordon. "It now concerns the living, and the living are more to be considered than the dead. And, after all, the dead are protected by the consideration of all honorable souls."

Ann read. There were only a few lines. There was no preface. It began abruptly:

"I think it was an emerald at first. I am sure my lover then, my husband now, did not give me a spurious stone. I must always hold to that belief. He had plenty of money. His family had the reputation of miserliness, but he could not have given me at the very first an imitation emerald. Everything points like a dreadful finger straight at my common sense that he did, but I will not believe. He bought it at Lord & Lovejoy's. I will not believe. Then the ring was too tight. I took it myself to a jeweler — not Lord & Lovejoy's — another. He told me. I had the setting enlarged. I wore the ring. I never spoke. The child came. My husband died. I waited a little while; then I went to the same jeweler, and old man with whom my own father used to deal. He took this poor green stone out of the setting, and I wore the setting without it. People wondered, but I did not care. The setting at least was good, even wonderful. People thought I had lost the stone. Then Jim became engaged to Ruth. I wanted to prove the girl. I wanted my son to have a better than his poor father had. Loyalty is worth more than any gem on earth. I should have kept my poor husband beyond suspicion in my own heart, since I was his wife. I had my chance. I went to my jeweler. Ruth has stood the test. Now she has the emerald, I leave the stone which I had taken from my own ring, unworthily taken, with the injunction that he believe in the unbelievable, that he believes in reasons so great to justify everything that he holds sacred the memory of his father for the sake of his mother who failed him.

"And I bid him thank God for his wife, who holds him above the evidence of her own reason triumphant over the sins which he might have committed."

It ended abruptly. Suddenly the situation became illuminated by a light which sanctified it. They all saw the poor woman who had finished her life on earth, who had been deceived, and whose love had not stood the test of deception, that last fiery test for love of first water. They saw her putting another woman to that same test, and proving the possibility of a love past all logic and reason, the most precious gem of the earth.

Ruth held up her hand, and the great emerald gleamed wonderfully. In its green depths, which seemed fathomless, could be imagined tossing seas, magic springtide of youth, all gracious fancies and romances for which the lovely color served as keynote.

"Put away your poor mother's stone very carefully," said Ruth, with tears in her eyes. "It seems to me that her love and suffering and death have made it a real emerald, after all, and made it true that your father gave it to her. Put away your mother's emerald very carefully, Jim dear, just as she kept it."
